

Volume VII ~ July 2013

TORRID LITERATURE JOURNAL

SPECIAL ISSUE: 2013 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES ANNOUNCED!

Breakthrough

Featured Poets:

Amelia Jane Nierenberg

Sarah Weitzman

And Many More!

Must Read Fiction:

“Cherry Blossoms”

By Kayla Knight

Special Interview:

Elizabeth Prisley a.k.a. Kali

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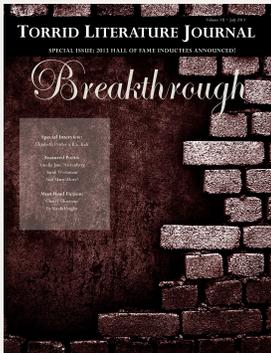
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FROM THE EDITORS

The Other Side

When we think of the concept demolition, we often think of the tearing down of a building, particularly an old structure. Deconstruction however is different. Deconstruction involves carefully taking apart a building while preserving important elements for re-use. This requires that the person or group doing the reconstruction be familiar with the object being taken apart. Now when we speak of deconstruction in terms of an individual, one question comes to mind. How often are we taking the time out to evaluate ourselves, especially during periods of high growth or transition? It is often said that the end of one thing is the beginning of another. It is also a known concept that growing pains are a part of life, but do we really understand what this means? What do we do when we outgrow certain things? Are we still trying to make it fit? If so, are we aware that by doing such a thing, we're forsaking the next step, phase, or level that is waiting on us all because we refuse to move forward?

We can't have a breakthrough without going through a period of purging first. We have to be familiar with ourselves and stand it up against who we're trying to become. The gap, the distinction, should be the motivation that compels us to get up and take action. This goes beyond the mere character evaluation. This concept also applies to where we are in life in comparison to where we want to be (i.e. work, relationships, lifestyle, etc.). Before change can take place, we have to know what needs to be purged and what needs to be retained. We have to have a breakthrough, an epiphany of sorts where this information is the realization that makes everything clear. Not clear in the sense of the work being done but clear in terms of now knowing what needs to be done to get us from point A to point C.

In between point A and point C is point B, a large wall that stands in the middle. It's in the way of our journey. It stands in between us and the other side. So what is the next step? I mean sure, we can go over or around this proverbial wall but why not go through it? Why take the shortcut in life when an investment in overcoming the greatest obstacle personal to us will yield better results? With that said, there is something else, something more. Point A is not the final destination.

Writing, including the literary techniques and devices used therein, are the equipment and tools used to support this effort of taking down walls, brick by brick. This is largely in part because literature inspires us. It motivates us. Literature has the universal power to entertain us and put us to action at the same time. It is our mode of transportation to ensure that we arrive at that specific thought, emotion, or idea. Volume VII Breakthrough is evidence of that. We have gathered the very best in the field of literary construction. From free verse poetry to more traditional forms of literature, these writers, the architects that they are, have mastered the art of deconstruction. They set the foundation, they build it up, and they take it all down at their will. They are artists. In an effort to give our readers an inside glimpse into the heart of an artist we have included a special featured interview with spoken word artist Elizabeth Prisley.

What's more, each project, event, journal, and book sponsored by TL Publishing Group is another avenue established to help our readers and writers get through to point C because we're always investing in new and creative ways to get the voices of our writers to readers who desire fine literature.

One example of this is our 2nd Annual Romancing the Craft of Poetry & Fiction Contest. We thankfully received several hundred entries during our submission period, which just ended last month. Our judges are now hard at work reviewing the entries. Inside our next issue, Volume VIII Revolution, we will announce the three winners and present their award-winning piece.

Another special project close to our hearts is our new Hall of Fame for literary excellence. Inside this issue, we announce our inaugural Hall of Fame members for 2013. You, our readers, have voted and as such, eight phenomenal writers have been chosen for induction. Visit our Hall of Fame website for a detailed look at the writers behind the words and places where you can find more of their phenomenal work.

In continuing with our journey of growth and expansion, next month we will be releasing our first book under Gateway Literature Books, an imprint of TL Publishing Group. This anthology, *Enter the Gateway*, is a very special edition that provides readers with words of inspiration by authors from around the globe. Visit our blog and website for updates regarding the anticipated release of this book. This is another platform, another opportunity to bring our readers closer to you, our readers.

When it is all said and done, keep in mind that just about everything in life has a cycle or season. Sometimes after going through a particularly rough period, we tend to let unnecessary weight build up in us that we should have left behind. This is very true for relationships or negative emotions that develop after an action or event has occurred. Deconstruction allows us to rid ourselves of things we should have left behind a long time ago. It gives us the opportunity to clean house so to speak. I have said it before and it warrants a repeat. There is a poem or story for everything. Need a laugh? Pick up a story. Need something to warm your heart or tickle your fantasy or dream? There is a poem for that too. Maybe you want something that is completely different from the environment you live in now. Maybe you just want to escape for a few hours. Believe me, anyone who has ever read an adventure, sci-fi, or fantasy novel will agree with me that there is a poem or story for that too.

Therefore, don't forget that you're never too late to have a breakthrough. You're never too far gone. Epiphanies don't have an expiration date. You're never too late to break down that wall of doubt, fear, panic, regret, hesitation, insecurity, or pain. As long as you have breath in your body, there is still time to overcome. There is time change, live, love, grow, and enjoy life. So go ahead and have your breakthrough.

Sincerely,

Alice Saunders

Follow me on Twitter:
[@lyricaltempest](#)

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1 ON 1: ELIZABETH "KALI" PRISLEY

By Alice Saunders



Visit Kali on the web: www.kalipoetics.com | <http://facebook.com/KaliPoetics>

Alice: Please tell us about yourself and your work.

Kali: Well I'm 26, a poet, adjunct professor, and agent of change. Spoken word poetry started out as a cathartic exercise for me to come to terms with anger and depression I felt about the frequency of sexual violence in our community. I continue to write about causes that affect me deeply. A favorite poet of mine (Aleshea Harris, a Tampa poet who moved to Cali) says in her play *Oddlie*, that there are many important things to write about, but what you should focus on writing is the imperatives. What puts you to bed and wakes you? These are the things I write about.

Alice: Can you please share with us your background in poetry?

Kali: I've been writing poetry since about the age of 12 or 13. I started out in a Creative Writing class in 9th grade and just never stopped. My first poems were filled with teen angst and confusion – I still have them, and in fact, reading back over these poems was the catalyst for me in writing "Suicide Note," one of my more popular slam pieces. I progressed to college where I earned my Bachelors in English with a focus on Creative Writing, specifically choosing poetry workshops as the core of my classes. However, many of the poetry workshop classes I took were filled with students who gave poor feedback and seemed convinced poetry had to be

full of rhyme and nature. It left a bitter taste in my mouth, and I put poetry away for a long while after that experience. It wasn't until February of 2012 that I heard spoken word for the first time and started writing my own.

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

Kali: There were a number of points where it hit home for me that poetry was my future, but I remember two most vividly. The first was the first time I performed a poem. When I finished, I was a nervous wreck, but as I headed to my seat, a young woman stopped me. She was in tears, and she gave me a hug and thanked me for sharing because she had

experienced sexual assault herself but had never been brave enough to put it into words until that moment. It was then that I realized the power I held through the words that came out of my mouth. The second was when I went with Wally B to Strawberry Crest High School to help facilitate performances and a workshop for the Hillsborough County Poetry Jam. After the workshop portion when students were sharing their poems, several students broke down in tears. A couple of them had come to personal realizations that were life changing and bonding, as they realized how much they had in common with each other. Watching these teens have such meaningful interactions with poetry, facilitated by Wally B, it just hit me in the gut that I needed to do this with my life. That more young people need to feel this power in themselves.

Alice: Why did you choose “Kali” as your artist name?

Kali: After performing a few times, a close friend commented to me that I sounded like a completely different person performing than when I spoke in regular conversation. I, too, felt like a different person was rising out of me as I tapped into a part of me I hadn't discovered before. I had just finished writing a poem that called on the mythology Kali, the Hindu Goddess of Creation, as a symbol for the power in women. At the end of the poem I invite audience members to call me Kali, and I guess the name stuck.

Alice: What classes do you teach and where?

Kali: I teach First Year Composition at the University of South Florida St. Pete. I've been teaching there since Fall of 2011. I also taught First Year Writing for a year at the University of Tampa.

Alice: Do you teach workshops?

Kali: I do. Mostly I teach workshops in high schools in Pinellas County. However, I'm open and available to teach workshops to any age group or level of experience.

Alice: What can attendees expect to learn at your workshops?

Kali: With high school students, I generally work on developing a foundation of poetic devices through formal instruction alongside constant encouragement to explore emotionally charged topics, like family background, relationships, or their attitudes towards school. For most of the students I work

with, it's a new experience to have someone ask them what they think and then listen when they speak.

Alice: What has been your biggest motivation? Where does your inspiration come from?

Kali: My biggest motivation is the feedback I receive from audiences I encounter, whether it's students at a high school or general audience members at slams and open mics. I believe without a doubt that every time we feel called to say something, it's because someone else needs to hear it. Before I perform I always pray for God to speak through me to someone in the room. 99 out of 100 people could have disliked my poem or not connected with it, but if that 1 person comes up afterwards and says they needed to hear what I had to say, then it's all worth it to me.

Alice: What do you do when you are not writing?

Kali: I feel like a part of me is always writing something! Whether I'm grading papers, or writing freelance for nonprofits and other organizations, or critiquing a friend's resume, I am constantly writing. However, when I do escape, I love the beach and frozen yogurt. I love sunshine and could spend all day every day lying out in it. Add some frozen yogurt in there, and I'm in heaven.

Alice: What has influenced your development as a writer and spoken word artist?

Kali: Every artist I listen to. I find I'm constantly re-watching favorite poets on YouTube. I think there are two guaranteed ways to improve as a writer: read and write more. My go-to pieces are probably Sarah

“I believe without a doubt that every time we feel called to say something, it's because someone else needs to hear it.”

Alice: What is your creative regimen? How often do you write?

Kali: My biggest struggle is probably carving out time to write without distraction. Generally writing is the last thing I do in the day before I go to bed. Most of the time this is when my brain is at its most creative. I can't count the number of nights I passed on sleep in order to write. But when I also have a million papers to grade, it's hard for me to silence the other demands in my life to just write.

Alice: How do you deal with writer's block? What is your advice on how to overcome it?

Kali: Always write. When I feel like I'm struggling to write something, or I know how I want to say it but it's just not coming out, my solution is always to just keep writing. Write through writer's block. Even if the words coming out are complete crap and you know you're going to throw it away or burn it, just keep writing. Maybe you need to write the same sentence over again a hundred times, eventually the words will flow.

Kay's TED talk, Sunni Patterson “We Made It” on Def Poetry, anything by Aleshea Harris, and Reggie Eldridge (another Tampa poet who moved away to Chicago). I just returned from Southern Fried, the Southeast regional poetry slam, and so I've gained a few new favorites as well. Bill Moran out of Texas. Dominique Ashaheed. Denice Frohman.

Alice: Is there a specific message or a recurring theme you communicate through your art?

Kali: Unintentionally, yes. I've written a lot about sexual violence and feminism since these are causes close to my heart. Feminism is a way of living in the world, in my opinion, one that reflects equality for all. Whether I'm intentionally writing about it or not, I think this leaks out of nearly everything I write.

Alice: Can you describe one of your favorite poems that you wrote? Why does this poem stand out more so than the others?

Kali: “Suicide Note” is the first poem I wrote that turned personal, using the first person

and inserting examples of my own life experiences with ownership. Poems before this one tend to say “she” or “her” without claiming these experiences as mine. I think this poem has done a lot for my growth as a writer, and has helped to push me forward as a performer. This poem was my first perfect “30” at a poetry slam. A video of this poem also won me a bid to the Women of the World Poetry Slam this past March.

Alice: Were you ever hesitant when it came to writing or sharing a specific poem? Why?

Kali: I'm like an iceberg. I write probably 90% more than I ever share on open mics or slam stages. Most of my writing is either personal venting or poems that are meant to just help me work through my own emotions. Then there are poems, specifically ones that address sexual violence, that I feel hesitant about sharing because I'm nervous about feedback. I have a poem about rape jokes that earned me quite a bit of negative feedback because it calls out artists in the community who treat rape like a joke, to the point where I even received rape threats. While sexual violence is not a cause I'm willing to be silent about, I have to admit that sometimes I feel like I need to “diversify” my portfolio of writing due to external pressure.

Alice: What has been the toughest criticism given to you as a poet? What has been the best compliment?

Kali: The toughest criticism is always slam scores. But you can't take those seriously. Competing in poetry slams has really taught me how to take my ego out of my poetry. The best compliments are the audience members who seek me out after a show to let me know how much a particular poem meant to them.

Alice: How often do you perform at open mic events?

Kali: It depends on my schedule, but I usually don't go more than a week without doing poetry somewhere. I slam every third Saturday of the month at Sacred Sounds, and I like to make it out to a couple of open mics as well. I think it's important for my own writing to listen to other poets. I also really value supporting my community and other artists who are developing shows.

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

Kali: My goals right now are specific. Start a nonprofit, and get booked at college circuit

shows. I applied to showcase at a National Association of Campus Activities event in the fall where I will hopefully be able to connect with agents and bookers from universities and colleges around the Mid-Atlantic. I'm also in the process of filing paperwork to turn Kali Poetics into a nonprofit.

Alice: What is Deuces Out Loud? What is the mission/goal?

Kali: Deuces Out Loud is an open mic just for teens and youth poets in St. Pete. The mission there is to grow a community of youth writers and performers. Youth leaders can be some of the most impactful in our communities, and in order for youth leaders to grow, they need places where they feel safe and where their ideas and experiences are valued. Heard Em Say, the teen poetry show started by Wally B in Tampa, has been my inspiration, and Wally B has been a great mentor in helping me find my way too.

Alice: You recently attended the Women of World Poetry Slam (WoWPS) 2013 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Can you please share with us your experience?

Kali: WoWOPS was definitely a turning point in my career as a spoken word poet. It was the first time I traveled alone to a competition and performed individually without any teammates, friends, or family as support. Competing against women whose poems I have only watched on YouTube was intimidating at first, but as the week of competition and workshops went on, I realized I fit in there. These were my people and my community. Tampa's slam scene is predominately male, so this was my first opportunity to share experiences with other women of what it's like to slam. All of us had similar experiences of being dismissed for being women, so it reassured me that I wasn't crazy and that some of the criticism I've received is just par for the course in a male-dominated environment. It inspired me to work hard to grow a community of inclusion. Also, having so many people in my own community vote for my video so that I could win that contest really touched my heart. I had no idea how many people would watch my video, share it, and vote. That outpouring of support absolutely floored me. I am still encountering people in the grocery store who stop me and ask, were you in a video competition? Are you that poet?

Alice: What advice do you have for aspiring spoken word artists?

Kali: Read. Write. Watch. Learn as much as you can. Write more. Read more. Perform as often as possible. Spoken word changes lives and saves lives. The words we speak are powerful, so take that responsibility seriously. People will hear you when you speak, so make sure you're using your words wisely. Read even more. Write even more. Challenge yourself. If you're feeling comfortable doing what you're doing, then do something different.

Alice: What would you like to see happen?

Kali: Wow, a lot of things. I want to be an international poet. I want to travel, perform, and facilitate workshops. I want to start creative arts programs in schools that give students an outlet to express themselves and discover what they really want out of life.

Alice: Do you have any upcoming projects, tours, events, or announcements that you would like to share with our readers?

Kali: I'm currently working on recording my first poetry CD and putting together a tour for the fall that would take me around the southeast. I'm also still facilitating the teen open mic, Deuces Out Loud, the second Friday of every month in St. Pete at the Royal Theater.

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

Kali: I don't know if there's one motto or quote that I live by. I just know that if I work as hard as I can and continue to pray that I'm on the right path, destiny is inevitable.

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?

Kali: I would just say that each one of us is meant for something, and life is all about the journey to find out what that is. There are so many social pressures telling us we aren't good enough, or can't do anything, or won't make anything of ourselves if we don't fall in line with the norm. I have never been normal. And I have never been so happy as when I embraced the parts of my life I feel passionate about. That's where happiness is.

ODE TO LITERATURE

“... Concave silts of scattered
reveries succumb ...”
Acreage

“...Sporadic deciphered truths per-
vade my convoluted mind ...”
Terror

“... The ornithological orches-
tra rose early with the magenta
orb...”
On Waking at Six

“... What about the folks that
worked to revive me...”
Near-Death Sestina

“...I read the description
carved on your tombstone like
a bittersweet lullaby...”
Raymond Chandler’s Grave

“...a poet waits to navigate
by his child’s laughter on
islands of observation...”
At Cape Cod

“...I know not where I am bound but
for the continuing current to sweep
me...”
An Ode to Arcadia

“... Time is the enemy love contends
with but until the fire gets cold
lovers don’t believe desire ends...”
Villanelle

“... The beach shore has translucence like
the small old buildings with emerald moss
growing on their veined walls...”
Near the Sea

“...i knew i would write about you
before the day was over like every
event and revelation i’ve had in my life
you were a revelation...”
30 Stockton

LIVING AS A CHILD

By Kate Ladew

is like being dropped into the middle of a novel
where every character knows each other’s faults and inconsistencies,
knows just what to say and what not to say to avoid a fight
the exact color of any others’ eye and what their face scrunches into when they cry
but you are left to wander, to discover on your own,
to grasp at things that are not yours to hold,
to want what is not there and has never been
it is so lonely to be a child,
with all the words that came before you spoken just out of earshot,
every movement new and dangerous
and as you struggle to find the thread, to stamp down the narrative
with your little foot and hold it there
it is stretching out miles ahead and miles behind
weaving roots around your feet you never can untie
parents are enigmas holding the secret to yourself
and they never let you know
because you are a child and can only be spoken to in whispers

Kate LaDew is a graduate from the University of North Carolina at Greens-
boro with a BA in Studio Art.

“...Struggling to remain sane, I reach out my trem-
bling hand at a hopeless attempt to grasp the other
me...”

Exquisite Failure

“50 State Rustbelt” by Brett Stout



Brett Stout is a 33-year-old artist and writer. He is a high school dropout and former construction worker turned college graduate and Paramedic. He creates art while mainly hung-over from a small cramped apartment in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Emily Spanos is from Baltimore County, Maryland. She is currently finishing her undergraduate studies while working to support herself and her education. She is a member of the Maryland Writers' Association and has been writing for the online Examiner. Two of her pieces were published by the *Wilderness House Literary Review*. Also, her work has appeared in many other publications such as, *The Curious Record – Dare 2 Share* (online literary magazine), Flash fiction piece, "Night Stalker", published in *Cigale Literary Magazine*, and poems: "Blue Eyes", "Incandescence" and "Anticipation", published in *Outrageous Fortune*. Spanos has even conducted a psychological research study that was also published by Towson University.

TORPOR

By: Emily Spanos

Sporadic deciphered truths
pervade my convoluted mind
with such vigor I blind sight
my heart with intrinsic ideals.

Condescending apathy is
derived from his disparity of
spoken thoughts, which consume
my intestines like a blood
yearning hawk for the miscellanies
of an overdone carcass.

ACREAGE

By Emily Spanos

Emeralds and olives align
the stems of the sward. Russet
rims of twigs tighten the aura

of pine that surrounds the
underbrush. Concave silts
of scattered reveries succumb

to the mind of all farces. The
root is yawning and callused
with endeavored barb that harass

the neighboring miser that scurries
on by. Lavish squalls beckon
upon its fringed bulk of awe.

Simon Ward received an MLitt in Creative Writing from the University of Glasgow. He is editor and founder of the Glasgow-based literary anthology *ClockWorks*. He writes fiction, poetry, and plays. He has recently settled in the U.S. with his wife.

ON WAKING AT SIX

By Simon Ward

The ornithological orchestra rose early
with the magenta orb, orange
and pink streaking the sky
in a breeze of blossom.

The singing stopped as
they obeisantly acknowledged
the fiery fuchsia advance
undiscernibly
upwards.

AN ODE TO ARCADIA

By Simon Ward

Let me float off past the point aboard a
sail-less ship, a rough paddle gripped loosely
in splintered fingers cutting the water's
edge. I know not where I am bound but for
the continuing current to sweep me
on with open eyes past beaches on which
I could cultivate contentment. With one
swift stroke I could evoke a thousand thoughts
nestled in a new nation.

I espy
a headland where trees meet sand meets water
lapping inexorably. I could build
a palatial paradise of felled logs
bound with bark and leaves loosely laid across
my roof. Inside I'd sit shaded with a
fire of fish sending smoke out into the
barren blue.

But I do not arch my oar
and steer resolutely round the bay but
drift outwards towards my horizon, for
in attaining Arcadia I have
to travel just that little bit further.

Sarah Brown Weitzman, a Pushcart nominee in 2012, has had work in numerous journals and anthologies including *The North American Review*, *American Writing*, *Potomac Review*, *Art Times*, *The Bellingham Review*, *M.I.T.Rune*, *Rattle*, and *Slant*, etc. Her second chapbook, "The Forbidden" was published by Pudding House in 2004 followed in 2005 by "Never Far From Flesh", a full-length volume of poetry (Pure Heart/Main Street Rag). She received a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in 1984. Main Street Rag published her latest book, "Herman and the Ice Witch", a children's novel, in 2011. A former New York academic, Sarah Brown Weitzman is retired and lives in Florida.

VILLANELE

By Sarah Brown Weitzman

Lovers don't believe desire ever ends
or that their love will unfold in a pattern already foretold.
Grand passions last only in legends

so often told and retold that each new lover fully intends
to feel the undying love the bards have extolled.
Lovers don't believe desire ever ends

so badly lovers rarely remain even friends.
Unless they die young like Romeo or Tristan's Isolde
grand passions lasts only in legends.

Love's promise always pretends
that feelings aren't fleeting but, like flesh, grow to get old.
Lovers don't believe desire ever ends

or that passion peaks and eventually spends
itself so totally it can never be revived as was foretold.
Grand passions lasts only in legends.

Time is the enemy love contends
with but until the fire gets cold
lovers don't believe desire ends
or that grand passions last only in legends.

Michelle Bayha resides in New Jersey. Bayha is currently a college freshman student that attends Montclair State University. She writes free-verse poetry and is inspired by her family, friends, and real life experiences. Her topic area is love-the ups and downs along with experiencing difficult times. The goal of her writing is to relay the message of a sense of unity and empathy that needs to be shown to people who suffer from mental illnesses or those who struggle every day to make it through.

Exquisite Failure

By: Michelle Bayha

Struggling to remain conscious,
I brush myself up against a cold wall,
Breathing heavily as scary thoughts enter my brain:
"Why not end it right now?"
I speak this aloud, pacing back and forth
In a tiny interior space which I call a room
While stepping on candy wrappers from months ago
Through filthy socks and used-up tissues
And tripping over the infamous beer bottle.
I manage to fall directly onto my face
With pieces of glass planting themselves onto my skin,
Whispers I hear from my long lost lover,
And the soft bed that I did not land on
Condescendingly glaring at me from above. . .
Struggling to remain sane,
I reach out my trembling hand
At a hopeless attempt to grasp
The other me, the happy me . . .
Not who I am now
Instead, failure gleams menacingly back
Since my job and my love are both gone.
I am like that beer bottle,
Shattered into billions of pieces,
Attempting to put myself back together
But inevitably remaining . . .
Broken

Emily Strauss has an M.A. in English, but is self-taught in poetry. More than 90 of her poems appear in public online and in anthologies. The natural world is her framework; she often focuses on the tension between nature and humanity, using concrete images to illuminate the loss of meaning between them.

BREATHING

By Emily Strauss

In a dream I lie at the bottom
Of a deep ocean though sunlight
Streams on my upturned face

I feel the pressure of water like
A huge balloon poised over me
I reach up my arms to embrace

That bladder of water, open my eyes
And inhale gently, slowly letting
The sea fill my lungs, float in my veins

Smiling at the ease of it. Later
I leave the apartment into white air
Thick as that sea, let it swirl around

Me, I peer through its lens and breathe,
Willing the water to enter, opening
Pores, channels, a clear path deep

Into summer heat flowing off the bay
Then I exhale, still standing on the path
No seaweed or starfish in sight.

THE WOOD STOVE

By Emily Strauss

You can hear when it dies
In the broken old stove—
A few last cracks
The subtle roar waning,
A new silence in the corners
Flickers not dancing
On the ceiling in the dark
A cool quiet falling
The air not so thick,
Only the blankets smelling
Of old smoke, your clothes,
Even your hands scented
With a lingering wood note
The kettle cold now
As you rise stumbling
To step outside in pajamas
hug a few logs back in
open the cooking lid
drop them heavily
onto the bed of coals
watch the gray surface
crack into deep red heat,
birch bark sputters into flame
smoke quickly filling your nose
And the room again, wave it off
slam the lid down
hop back in bed
the slow roar rising, heat
spreading again.

Amelia Jane Nierenberg is a Junior at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School in New York. She is a Fiction Reader for the *Adroit Journal*, and spends much of her free time painting and writing. She has been published in the December issue of *Amazing Kids! Magazine*, and *Tap Magazine* Issue 25: Bare. Her work is forthcoming in *Prick of the Spindle*, the *Blue Pencil Online* and the *Blue Lake Review*.

LA MÔME PIAR

By Amelia Jane Nierenberg

Your life curling up in crimson smoke
The Belle of the ball, France's rose
Your voice, pouring out of you, thundering rain
Eyes closed, hands outstretched, lyrics rasp
Tu es notre chanson, notre eau de vie
La môme Piaf, singing in the smoky cabaret

Violin strings are heartstrings, New Year's Eve cabaret
As French as it gets, sweat and smoke
The crass song of late nights, c'est la vie
Waves of your voice crashed against cliffs, which rose
Your voice unbridled, take your hand off the rein
Watermelon mouth wide, red lipstick squeezing out a living rasp

Black heels click the stage, filed with Provençal rasp
Unapologetic bohemian-ness of this cabaret
You queen of the night, long may passion reign
Let stage fright and inhibition ascend up in smoke
From the seams of your nylons, your rose
Ne restes jamais, Édith. Prends ta vie.

Paris enslaved to your message, la vie
Your scent playing around nostrils, fingernails rasp
Your lips, kissing at the corners, a shade of deep rose
All of society at your feet, "Allez, voir Édith au Cabaret!"
Their hearts, scortched, the end of your cigarette, smoke
Your voice spewing from the loneliness of a child in the rain

Breaths like ovals, perfect droplets of rain
Do I deserve to vive ta vie?
But this desperate exterior, just mirrors and smoke
A fight against "can't," this visceral rasp
Prends le nom 'Piaf,' un oiseau, voles du cabaret
Fragile and transparent, the petal of a rose

The soul of France in your throat, the spirit of a nation rose
Bringing light to the darkness with your short vibrant reign
Almost grasping your words under the lights of a cabaret
Work yourself to death, sauves ta vie
Expert hands twirling you around, your breath a rasp
You followed through, never blowing smoke

The rain of your heart, la passion de la vie,
Rising from the cabaret flame, a pillar of smoke
And the rose of your voice, a solitary, undying rasp

B.Z. NIDITCH is a poet, playwright, fiction writer and teacher. His work is widely published in journals and magazines throughout the world, including: *Columbia: A Magazine of Poetry and Art*; *The Literary Review*; *Denver Quarterly*; *Hawaii Review*; *Le Guepard* (France); *Kadmos* (France); *Prism International*; *Jejune* (Czech Republic); *Leopold Bloom* (Budapest); *Antioch Review*; and *Prairie Schooner*, among others. He lives in Brookline, Massachusetts.

AT CAPE COD

By B.Z. Niditch

Along the gazebo shade
on this ocean side
by Bay windows
eclipsed by night swells
phantom memories float
as a wave of ideas
press me
here at the Cape
with dark sun glasses
consumed by rays
with my baseball hat
on backwards
keeping watch
on my home made kayak
near the sand dunes
breathing in a south wind
tossing about
like the gulls on the deck
of the home harbor
by beachcombers
with sea dog voices
resembling the pirates
of Penzance
playing cards on the beach
as a poet waits
to navigate
by his child's laughter
on islands of observation.

JACQUELINE'S CELLO

By B.Z. Niditch

You played Bach
in his shadow
opening memory
on your fingers
moving chords
hidden in echoes
in absence of speech
of ebullient signals
mingled notes
augmented words
of a Paris reunion
in a major key
of harmonic fate.

Elena Botts grew up in Maryland, and currently lives in Northern Virginia. She is still attending school. She also likes to run and write. She's been published in multiple magazines in the past year and is currently working with a small-press editor on a book of poetry titled "A Little Luminescence" (check it out at www.allbook-books.com).

WE PULLED YOU OUT OF THE WATER

By Elena Botts

we pulled you out of the water
warm and solid as afternoon
(i open the blinds)
sunshine (you close your eyes).
you are crying, but only
because you hold the ocean
tight against your larynx
when there are orange skies
in morning, night, it doesn't matter-
you must atlas this burden-
hoist yourself upon your back
over and over like waves
surmounting and then collapsing
into shells that you lay down
so when we hear your echo
in twelve years time
you will be pleased.
you can smile now, smile and shut down
for you are far out
adrift on a lifeboat, trailing the
empty frigate of your own soul. this is the only
how for you to be whole.
we pulled you out of the brine, but-
then you were just a body.

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.

JOYCE KILMER IN NOVEMBER

By James Sutton

When it gets cold enough to see my breath
& watch it freeze, a tree starts feeling less
of what it knew when sunlight rose, back when
it seemed that loving warmth would never fail.
Before it first discovered it must die,
when it still felt immortal, it was then
it felt compelled to put out leaves & try;
but now, it feels too old even to sigh.
In a dry month, life eases into shade
& disappears. Trees linger hard & cold
& grow more hollow, as their summer fades.
But roots keep growing, when a tree grows old.
In fact, roots grow after a tree is dead.
So does the music from a poet's head.

Steven Westbrook is a seventeen year old Creative Writing student and Photographer currently living in Jacksonville, Florida. In his free time he is often reading, blogging, making abstract pastel drawings or satirical collages, watching movies, sneaking into places in which to take pictures (parking lots, abandoned churches, and gated communities for example), eating TV diners and being obsessed with the graphic novels of Craig Thompson. He has writing and photo publications in *The Claremont Review*, *Elan Literature* under his legal name, Steven Adams, an upcoming issue of *Squalorly Literature*, and a previous issue of the *Torrid Literature Journal*.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO CALL IT

By Steven Westbrook

Again you've caught me
as the nude one in the conversation, usually
this isn't a problem. You could waste
all your problems
on me
I'd just tell you one would be sufficient.
Now something is
undone, out done,
Done?
I can't tell
because you're still talking.
But little do you know
the crescent of my bitten fingernail
was and is
resting under my tongue
and my tongue
on its own accord loves the contrast
between the mountainous concaved
edge and smooth and more prominent
curve, I don't know what I'd call that...
Nerves! Because you're still talking...
Or
I'm the only one who loves
this feeling...

Philip Jackey has been reading and writing poetry since the age of thirteen. He lives in Elkhart Indiana with his wife Stephanie and two step children. He has been published in *The Write Place at the Write Time* and *Torrid Literature*.

CHILDHOOD

By Philip Jackey

Wish I was that little boy again,
bare feet in a pair of pajamas
caressing the carpet because
at that age it's ok
to let raw emotion sprawl
on the living room floor.
I was happy as home movies so
it never took much to get me smiling,
just silly pictures & action figures
bear hugs & bear claws.
This was way before I learned
of a calorie or its consequence.
Or of trans fat. Or clogged arteries.
Or what it really means
to have a lion's heart

roaring through the day
then it's off to the second job
eleven to eleven,
miles from my wife and child
where weekends are mandatory.
And all the while I worry
because zoologists claim that
cubs are killed when
lions invade a pride.
It's on TV all the time:
FATHER COMES HOME,
FINDS FAMILY MURDERED
HOUSE BURGLARIZED.

And if I could be that little boy again,
turn around, face my dad
from his living room floor
carpet fibers stuck in my fingernails
and ask: "what happens
when you die?"

Don't believe him though,
I'd believe what a child should.
I'd believe we dance with angels
top of dreamy clouds
guiding us back home

just in time
for supper.

Lee Passarella is a founding member and senior literary editor of *Atlanta Review* and acted as editor-in-chief of *FutureCycle Poetry* and *Coreopsis Books*. His poetry has appeared in *Chelsea*, *Cream City Review*, *Louisville Review*, *The Sun*, *Antietam Review*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *The Formalist*, *Cortland Review*, and many other periodicals. Recent publications include *Stickman Review*, *FutureCycle Poetry*, and *Rock & Sling*. “Swallowed up in Victory”, Passarella’s long narrative poem based on the American Civil War, was published by White Mane Books in 2002. In addition, he has published two other books of poetry: “The Geometry of Loneliness” (David Roberts Books) and “Sight-Reading Schumann” (Pudding House Publications).

NEAR-DEATH SESTINA

Lee Passarella

At the hospital, the psychiatrist, a nice young intern, asked me to recall my near-death experience. A bothersome request, but it was for research, which I respect, so I took the bait: “Starting where?” “Well, can you describe, for example, the time immediately prior to your loss of consciousness?”

Notepad in hand, the enthusiastic kid seemed disappointed to hear that indignation over hospital mystery meat and puckered gravy occupied

my thoughts just prior to such time. The poor tray worker occupied with carrying away leftover slop found me unresponsive, tried to recall me from the grave (or from my gravy reverie), loud enough for Nurse to hear. In she rushed and punched Code Blue. But it didn’t require too much research to know a patient in for chronic hemorrhoids doesn’t normally lose consciousness, turn cyanotic, blue as the proverbial berry. The literature doesn’t describe

a lot of such grim outcomes. . . . “Yes,” the kid agreed, “but please, describe what you experienced while you were ‘under’—not what thoughts occupied the hospital staff, but what *you* felt once you slipped out of consciousness.”

He tried to help: “Were you aware of anything or anyone? Can you recall any sounds or images? Just. . . *anything?*” Well, I’d read about the research of course and could almost guess the kind of things he’d like to hear

from me. What about the folks that worked to revive me? Did I hear their voices in my disembodied state? Maybe I could even describe the agitated calls for meds and the defibrillator? I haven’t researched it deeply, but the near-dead, once out of the “corpse” they’ve occupied, report hovering just below the ceiling, hearing everything, which they recall with perfect accuracy. Or so I’ve read. Me? I have no consciousness

of anything like that. My mind’s a blank. My blank’s a mind. *No* consciousness, that’s what I remember, if you call that remembering. What did I hear?

Or see? Well, *nada!* I mean, I certainly don’t claim to have total recall, but I remember being *born* in more detail than that. So how could I describe the out-of-body experience I never had? The young guy seemed pre-occupied, wondering how to politely end the interview, get on with his research.

But he looked so disappointed! and wanting to do my bit for research, I thought fast and added, “Now that I recall. . . I had this sort of consciousness that people were prodding and poking at the me that used to be. . . . The room was occupied to overflowing with these people all in white like angels, and I could hear them saying things like ‘epinephrine,’ ‘1 mg,’ and ‘Clear!’ . . .” And then went on to describe to my rapt audience the usual tunnel-and-white-light scenery—all I could “recall.”

A little more research, there might have been even more I could “recall.” But losing consciousness from some hunk of mystery meat stuck in the craw? Describe Nursie’s rib-tickling Heimlich for my self-occupied young Freud? Think he’d even *hear?*

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.

TO THE CRITIC

By Jacob Erin-Cilberto

you come into my home
soiled shoes of contempt
staining my carpet mind
you turn over my furniture with your cynical
twists of phrase

a salesman of sorts
wares of thin context
cheap shots
meant to demote egos
to minimum wage wit

because you have been door to door
your whole life
and found no one to buy into
your sarcasm and self-effacing
product of discontentment

i will bide your bleached raw breath
and show you my best face
of hospitality,
absorb your scorn
and offer you one more drink
before you leave

then reorganize my ego once you have left
scour the carpet to eliminate any sign
i let you walk through my door
pull out my pen

and resume my poetic existence
not having spent a dime on your wares
but wary of the next knock
i receive,
as i go about arranging the tabled text
semantic sofa
and connotative chairs
back where they were

before you happened by.

Jim Landwehr enjoys writing creative non-fiction, fiction, memoir, and poetry and is enrolled in the AllWriters' workplace and workshop (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.

BWCA: GOING BACK

By Jim Landwehr

The trees awaited
the water did too
for the days every year
when we canoed
In lakes and rivers
round bends and bays
we likely won't
forget those days
When brothers four
or sometimes three
hung together
young and free.
Twenty years later
we returned
to the place we loved
because we'd learned
that place held something
for each of us now
It held us together
mystically somehow.
Kids came this time
five altogether
everything was great
even the weather.
Fish were caught
and stories retold
of how we did it
before we were old.

Gary Beck has spent most of his adult life as a theater director. His chapbook "Remembrance" was published by Origami Condom Press, "The Conquest of Soma-lia" was published by Cervena Barva Press, "The Dance of Hate" was published by Calliope Nerve Media, "Material Questions" was published by Silkworms Ink, "Dispossessed" was published by Medulla Press, "Mutilated Girls" was published by Heavy Hands Ink and Pavan and other poems was published by Indigo Mosaic. A collection of his poetry "Days of Destruction" was published by Marie Celeste Press. Another collection "Expectations" was published by Rogue Scholars Press and "Dawn in Cities" and "Assault on Nature" are being published by Winter Goose Press. His novel "Extreme Change" was published by Cogwheel Press. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes and Sophocles have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry has appeared in hundreds of literary magazines. He currently lives in New York City.

CHOICES

By Gary Beck

Bodies swirl through cities
divorced from evolution
suspending genetic progress,
fattening themselves
on chemical produce
dissolving structure,
completely conceding
future sustenance
for urban comforts.

DESYNTHESIS

By Gary Beck

People must think
that oxygen
grows on buildings,
since we replace trees
with lifeless structures.
Soon we'll suffer
a rude awakening
when carbon emissions,
unabsorbed by
glass, steel, concrete,
asphyxiate us.

Shirley Kuo is an aspiring poet currently residing in California. Kuo enjoys books, early sunrises, and thunderstorms.

RAYMOND CHANDLER'S GRAVE

By Shirley Kuo

your wine-stained fingertips remind
me of how january wraps her ice fingers
around me, folding her lips into mine like
a constant reminder that you
will leave me one day.
it became harder to accept mystery the day
my mother left a trail of white oleanders
wilting in her dead wake. i suppose that's
because not all dying words are true.
(oh these charred lungs of mine.) you see only
her beauty, but
not the steel underneath. i went to
visit your grave yesterday for the first time,
where i read the description carved on
your tombstone like a bittersweet lullaby:
dead men are heavier than broken hearts.
oh,
if only that were true.

Erren Geraud Kelly is a poet based in Chicago, by way of Louisiana, by way of Maine, by way of California, by way of new York City and so on. Kelly has been writing for 25 years and has over 80 publications in print and online in such publications as *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Mudfish*, *Poetry Magazine* (online) and other publications. Kelly's most recent publication was in "In Our Own Words," a Generation X poetry anthology; in addition to other anthologies such as "Fertile Ground," *Beyond The Frontier* and other anthologies. Kelly is also the author of the chapbook, "Disturbing The Peace," on Night Ballet Press. Kelly received a B.A. in English-Creative Writing from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

30 STOCKTON

Erren Geraud Kelly

i offered you my seat
after having sat down
you sat down and brushed
your hair back
wiping away a hard day
from your eyes
i asked you if you were
having it rough
and you told me through
your tears
i told you i was going
to a poetry reading
in north beach
and you thought
that was interesting
then you smiled that smile
that same smile you smiled
at me every time
we looked at each other
from the stockton tunnel
to washington square park
you got off there
where bodies lay
in the sun
i said "nice smile"
and you said
"so do you"
i went to a poetry reading
in north beach
at the library
and i thought of you
thought more of you
than the poet
at the reading
wrote this poem
during the reading
like lightning in the mind
i knew i would write about you
before the day was over
like every event and revelation
i've had in my life
you were a revelation
i thought if a poem about you
would be enough
would it be worth it
to ride the same bus
at the same time
on the same day
for the next few weeks
trying to find you
so you can smile at me
again
i would run my fingers
through your
dark brown hair
cut in a bob
and take your tears
away

John Sierpinski is a working writer at the Vest Conservatory for Writers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He has recently been published in the *California Quarterly*, *North Coast Review*, and *Icon*. Sierpinski is currently working a collection.

MOMENT

By John Sierpinski

There is that moment
of perfect clarity
where I stand inside
the Santa Monica
bar at the jukebox.
The lights glow deep
like a rocket lift off.
My good friend, Corporal
USS Marine Corps,
Fred Voss, laughs.
He tells the same story
to the woman/girl
bartender
that he has already
told me, twice. A raspy
voice sings, "You can't
always get what you want..."
My little girl
and wife are at the bar,
too. They keep an eye

on me. They are happy
when I work. They
are sad when I drink.
The door of the bar
is wide open, lets in
the mix of southern
California sunset,
warmth and eye burning
car exhaust.

There is that moment
of perfect clarity
where after an amphetamine
fueled work week
at Papermate Pen
Corporation,
I hold up
that cold glass of beer
and the bar lights
shine through.
There is that amber

liquid, that disappearing
white, foam head.
I tip the iced glass to my
lips. There is that moment
of perfect clarity
where the beer
is cold, it's good.
It's really
good.
The muted yellow
liquid
flows to my feet,
and then up through
my chest, my nose,
my brain. This
is where
I get what I want.
Always. This is where
I get what I
need.

Laura Smith is a poetry and fiction writer and a 2007 graduate of Carlow University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Most of her writing time is spent composing short stories and poems and writing children's books. Smith has also written hundreds of news blogs and literary reviews for the websites, Tales of Our Time (www.talesofourtime.com), Blogger News (www.bloggernews.net) and Suite 101 (www.suite101.com). One of her blogs was reprinted in the September 2009 Oregon newsletter titled *South Coast Seniors*. She has also been published in "6S", a collection of short-short stories printed by Six Sentences (<http://sixsentences.blogspot.com/>), as well as in *Rune Magazine*, *Voices from the Garage*, *Falling Star Magazine*, *Blast Furnace Press* and *The Lavender Review*.

FIRST DAY OF HIGH SCHOOL

By Laura Smith

is always a maze of hallway tile,
closed classroom doors.

Vines grow from the open ceiling.
The sky above, freedom blue. Walls shift

like movable sets. Disoriented students
always lost on campus.

The panic of being walled in,
racing the timed, rattling bells.

Reading off room numbers,
shifting stacks of books in rubbery arms,

A cacophony of flapping notebook paper,
tapping of pens, scuff mark squeaks

of new shoes on shiny floors.

Following sidewalk paths

from building to building,
squinting at schedules in illegible print.

Stomach wrenches like the real thing
at the glares from faculty, zoning in on my innocence.

“16 Gauge Hydration Machine” by Brett Stout



Brett Stout is a 33-year-old artist and writer. He is a high school dropout and former construction worker turned college graduate and Paramedic. He creates art while mainly hung-over from a small cramped apartment in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

FICTION

FALLEN STAR

By: Brittany Zelkovich

Brittany Zelkovich is based out of Salem, Oregon, this Arizona transplant writes about almost anything. She recently received her Associates in Liberal Arts and her Certificate in Creative Writing from Chandler Gilbert Community College. Between working at Starbucks and planning her wedding, she is currently working on her first novel.

“Papa! Papa!” The small strawberry blonde girl cried as she clambered up into the big dually truck. The old man in the driver’s seat grunted his reply. The girl, no older than seven, sat in the passenger seat, and clicked her seatbelt across her lap.

“You saw Man o’War, Papa?” The man, with silver hair combed back to perfection, nodded as the truck rumbled to life. “And Secretariat?” Her grandpa nodded again. “And John Henry?” The old man, in his button up western shirt turned to his tenacious granddaughter, his pale eyes alight beneath bushy silver brows.

“Yes,” he said at last.

“And we’re going to see them all today?” Her young voice squeaked a little in her excitement. Her papa nodded once more, a smile on his lips as he steered the truck down the dusty lane toward the highway.

* * * *

This autumn day is a far cry from the trip they took that summer.

Terri helps her Papa into the dusty old dually and clicks the seatbelt across his lap. She closes the passenger door, walks through the dust to the other side and climbs in. The truck hasn’t changed since that day. It still smells of old leather and upholstered seats, of ancient dust and horses long since past. This truck, untouched by time, is a comfort for both of its passengers.

The engine turns over and Terri’s dread mounts, but she won’t let the old man know that.

“Kentucky Horse Park, here we come!” Her enthusiasm is forced, and the old man ignores her by staring out the window. The hour drive is silent save for the song of the tires on the highway. Terri wonders if she should have bothered with this trip at all when a sign for the park whips past. She can’t suppress the childlike thrill that runs through her.

“We’re almost there!”

The old man’s eyes never leave the blue-green pastures filled with grazing horses. Like a pouting child he’s giving her the silent treatment. Terri sighs.

The truck pulls into a parking space and Terri climbs out. Her work boots clunking on the ground, she opens the bed of the truck. There is the source of all her troubles. She removes the wheelchair, an older model straight from the hospital, from the truck bed and wheels it to the passenger side of the dually. She spends the next ten minutes making sure her papa is situated and comfortable. All in silence. And then they are on their way.

“Are you ready, Papa?” She asks the wheelchair bound man. He grunts. Terri pushes the wheelchair through the entry of the park- past the forgettable statue of Secretariat, sad in its inaccuracy- and toward the ticket booth.

“Back again, Miss Terri?” the large black woman behind the counter asks with a smile.

“Yep.” Terri tries to smile. “Papa sure loves the park!” Again the elderly man just grunts. Terri pays and pushes the chair down a tree-lined boulevard leading to the larger than life statue and tomb of Man o’War.

“What do you think, Papa?” Terri feigns happiness, “he gettin’ any bigger?”

“No,” the old man grouses. “He’s just moldin’ away down there- same as last week.”

The woman remains silent as she pushes the man away from Man o’War. They spend the next half hour in painful silence as they meander through the museum. They pass wagons pulled by stuffed horses, their manes and tails eerie in their lifelessness. There are exhibits of the horse’s evolution with mannequins of the first “horse” on Earth, Eohippus. In one corner stands Bucephalus; half rearing as his rider, Alexander the Great, wields a large sword.

Above them hangs a large grey Arabian, dangling from a sling as its loaded onto a ship. Terri remembers how, as a child, the suspended horse had frightened her, but now she just marvels at the physics of hanging a once-live horse from the ceiling.

Before long they enter the Breed Showcase; a long hallway filled with a preserved representative of every major breed in the world. It always thrills Terri, but leaves her a little sad too; too many dead horses in one room.

As the breed showcase comes to an end Terri pushes her grandfather out of the museum and back into the warm autumn sun and makes a beeline for the Hall of Champions.

The duo enters the big barn filled with racing’s biggest names, but it’s one stall in particular they’re looking for.

“Look, Papa!” Terri exclaims as they stop in front of the stall. “It’s John Henry, you’re favorite.” The old man’s eyes light up at the thought of touching the famous Thoroughbred, but the old bay horse, infamous for his indifference, ignores them.

“Yeah, and look at him,” her papa grumbles. “Locked away in some stall, too old to even remember what it was like to run

on a good track.”

Terri frowns but refuses to let her grandfather’s sour mood ruin a day at the park. They pass stall after stall housing greats like Cigar and Funny Cide, but still the old man’s shoulders sag. They leave the Champions behind to munch their hay, and find a spot at the arena where a show is being put on. The riders at the park are world class, and Terri realizes too late that watching the riders might not improve her grandfather’s mood.

She’ll never forget pulling up to the farm to find Star, her papa’s favorite stallion, alone at the fence, his left foreleg dangling useless from his body. His saddle, though still on, was far from intact and fear gripped her. She ran, forgetting the black stallion in her panic, in search of her grandfather. She found him on the side of the trail, in a dried creek bed, bloodied and broken. The ground was torn where Star had started, frightened by a noise or passing squirrel, and then fallen down the steep grade, breaking his leg and the old man’s back. She had called 911 from her cell phone, the rest of her memories are just red flashes and a sense of terror. It was time to leave the riding ring behind.

* * * *

A few hours later, after touring more breeding barns and watching children on their pony rides, Terri pushes the wheelchair up a large hill. It was once her Papa’s favorite place in the whole park, she hopes it will bring some good cheer back to him. From here they can see all the rambling fields filled with mares and their foals. The bluegrass of Kentucky, only visible to the natives, appears as a vast ocean beneath them.

Terri buys them each a hotdog from a nearby vendor, and takes a seat next to her grandpa on a bench. She takes a bite of her dog, but the old man does nothing.

“Better eat, or it’ll get cold.”

Still her papa stays silent. Terri sighs. Minutes drag by as the woman finishes her hotdog.

“Why do you keep bringing me here?” He asks, never taking his eyes from the pastures below.

“So you won’t forget.”

“Forget what?” He snaps.

“What it was all for, Papa.” She looks at him, but he’s careful to avoid her eyes, so much like his.

“It was all a waste.”

“You don’t mean that.” Terri shakes her head in disappointment, but she understands.

“The hell I don’t...”

“You’ve loved horses your entire life. It’s in your blood.”

“Yeah?” He asks as he turns to face her. “It’s what put me in this damn chair!”

Terri flinches at his tone, but isn’t surprised by his anger.

“Sure, Papa,” she soothes, much like she would a frightened horse. “But, even though Star paralyzed you, you still cried when I told you he’d been put down.”

The old man ignores her.

“You love ‘em the same as you always have. And you passed that on to me.”

“Get out now while you still have your legs,” the old man gripes.

“I couldn’t leave, not for all the world. You know that.”

Her papa looks at her sternly, but there is fear in his eyes. He doesn’t say another word.

After leaving the hill, the unlikely duo peruse the museum of the American Saddlebred, though it holds little of interest for either of them. It’s when they come across the new statue of Secretariat that the wheelchair stops. Though Terri doesn’t know it, the bronze of one of the world’s greatest racehorses moves both her and her grandfather.

“Was he really this beautiful, Papa?” Terri’s voice is little more than a whisper, but still sounds childlike with wonder.

“It doesn’t do him justice,” he says of the statue.

They both stare at the piece of art. They absorb every last detail; the short, windswept mane, the graceful arch of the neck, the deep, powerful chest, and the fiery but kind look in the eye. The bronze is of Secretariat, with jockey Ron Turcotte up and ever faithful groom Eddie Sweat beside. The trees set behind the statue are fading into oranges and yellows, and before long will wither away completely. But for now the setting sun lights them up, proving the perfect background for remembering the famous chestnut colt.

“He always was my favorite,” Terri whispers as she watches the sun retreat behind the trees.

Her papa nods, “Because you know good horses.”

“Thanks to you.”

The old man says nothing more and after a few more minutes with Secretariat, they turn to leave. As Terri pushes the wheelchair into the parking lot the old man’s hand, rough from a lifetime of working with horses, clasps with hers.

“Thank you.”

CHERRY BLOSSOMS

By Kayla Knight

Kayla Knight is a student at Lindenwood University, majoring in Creative Writing.

The silence of that night demanded attention, but the cold would not be ignored either. I wish I could say it was a welcome distraction, but it was almost as bad as the thoughts of her that plagued me. I drove my beat-up truck, approaching that very bridge I swore to myself never to cross again. Passing under a flickering streetlight, I stole a glance at the clock on my dash; 11:56. I had four minutes. I turned off the main road, gravel crunched under my tires. I'm surprised they even bothered to repair that rickety bridge. Dread dropped like pebbles in my stomach. I avoided driving over this stupid bridge for a whole year, but she was vindictive, and demanded this as a rendezvous point, every year.

11:59...no, midnight. Damn. I didn't see her coming. The door clicked open, she slipped in with a sound no louder than a sigh. I avoided looking at her.

"Breathe, Kent." It was a demand. Despite the protest of my lungs, who were happy as I was to suffocate and die right there, my breath rushed out. My dread became anger--indignant anger. I hated the first day of spring.

Sixteen is a poisonous age. To be young and capable, but to lack a scope or understanding of far-reaching consequences is dangerous, even deadly. None of that crossed my mind when I saw Mae that first night of spring. I just remember that the air was just warm enough to tease her into thinking she didn't need a sweater. Even with her arms crossed and shoulders hunched against the wind, she exuded...something. I couldn't put my finger on it, but it was in her chuckle at her friend's joke and the determination in her eyes when she looked at me for the first time.

I sat on the hood of my truck, willing her friend to go join some of the other groups huddled closer to the bonfire so I could have a chance to say "hello" without looking like a complete ass. She beat me to it; in the ten steps it took her to leave her friend and walk over to me, I figured out her draw.

"Hi, I'm Mae." It was there in her voice when she offered her hand. Confidence.

"Kent," I smiled back, shaking her hand.

"Now that we've got the niceties out of the way, are you going to give me your coat?"

I shrugged off that worn denim jacket without second thought and slipped it on her slender shoulders.

"Now you have to stick close." Mae winked and simpered off. I stumbled along after her, intent that I would get my jacket back before the end of the night. I never did. Into the summer months that followed that spring, even when it felt too hot for the bare amount of clothes to be considered decent, she kept my jacket. I didn't care. It really did look better on her.

"Aren't you going to let me wear it?" She tugged on my sleeve. I huffed and struggled out of my denim jacket, tossing it into her lap.

"Don't tell me chivalry has died since last year!"

"It hasn't; just abandoned me is all," I sighed.

We rode in silence for a while more. I turned down the dirt path that lead up to the Braemer's barn. She'd demand a visit there as well, I thought I'd beat her to it. I parked under the still-barren cherry tree.

"Let's not get out just yet," whispered Mae. I felt her tuck herself up close to me. The scent of cherry blossoms tickled viciously at my nose. I hated that in this moment, in spite of myself, I still wanted her. She must've sensed it; her lips pressed softly to my neck, her eyelashes grazed my jaw. I didn't know how long I could fight her, and I despised the fact that we were familiar enough with each other to know how soon my resolve would break. And that we both knew how much I'd hate myself after.

Brynne lit up with every tiny delight she came across, and tonight I saw no difference. Mae went out with some friends, and my baby sister insisted we go ice-skating, like old times. I fought her over her choice in activity, but complied anyway. I strapped on those rentals like it was the happiest damn moment in my life.

"Are you gonna marry Mae?" she chimed as she lapped me once again.

"I don't know, Brynne; I'm seventeen," I shrugged. "Why are you worried about that? You're twelve."

Brynne changed direction, her blue eyes meeting mine as she skated slowly backward.

"I heard you say you love her on Valentine's Day," she answered. "Mom says people get married when they're in love."

"Well yeah," I replied. "But you can love lots of people before that ever happens."

"But--"

My phone rang. I cut her off to answer.

“K-Kent!” Mae stuttered before I even said hello.

“What is it, babe?” I asked. Brynne sauntered off and skated in small circle as I talked.

“Anne’s parents came-came h-home early. Said ‘too drunk, go home!’” Her words slurred together and she giggled.

“Do you need me to come get you?”

“Yeah!” She laughed again and hung up.

My sister and I pulled up in front of Anne Braemer’s house half an hour later. Brynne sat facing away from me. I knew she was annoyed with me for cutting our night short. After I persuaded Mae out of the house, I slid her into the middle seat.

“Remember our deal, Brynne,” I winked at my sister. She stuck her tongue out.

I pulled out of the Braemer’s yard, down the gravel road that lead back to the main one. I went carefully because I knew there might be ice.

“Lemme drive!” Mae exclaimed. Brynne continued to look uninterested.

“No,” I snapped. “It’s icy and you’re drunk.”

She huffed and folded her arms.

The bridge came closer, and everything happened at once. Mae reached for the steering wheel, I tried to push her off. The car swerved closer to the edge of the bridge. Brynne screamed in terror. I grabbed the wheel and tried to correct the car, but just before the end, the tires slipped on ice. I just remember falling. Falling and the screams. And then silence.

I woke up in the ICU. I don’t remember much, but the news of my sister’s death will haunt me forever. Maybe if she had died on impact, and not suffered, bleeding and waiting for what would come too late, I wouldn’t hate myself so much. I’d blame Mae just as long as I would love her.

I told her I hated her, but Mae never believed such things. When she left for school in the fall, I hoped to put my ordeal behind me, but she came back. That first time, I made the grandiose claim I never wanted to see her again.

“You don’t mean it,” said Mae simply. And as if to prove me wrong, she gave me the most passionate kiss as a final plea. It worked. I couldn’t stay away.

“Once a year,” she told me. “We’re the only two who share this twisted ordeal. You won’t spend that anniversary alone.”

I reluctantly agreed.

At least I had alcohol to help me numb her out of my brain whenever those meetings occurred, and as she primped in my bathroom later that night, I cracked open a bottle of cheap bourbon, drinking on it until I passed out again.

Morning came and Mae went. I didn’t wake up to see her off. When noon cracked through my blinds that day, I jolted awake, aware I was alone. I got dressed and stumbled out to visit Brynne’s grave.

I drove out to the post my parents chose for her, right at the foot of my grandfather. The spot was tucked away in a small grove of trees near an old church, but down a well-hidden path. After I payed my respects, a soft chill rustled through me. I headed back to my truck.

Laying on the hood was an old denim jacket and a sprig of cherry blossoms. A note beside them read, “Until next year.”

DILAPIDATED

By Thomas Cowell

Thomas Cowell is a full-bearded twenty-nine-year-old who takes long walks through the woods of Washington.

It's been three years but we're in Hawaii again, and I'm staring at a tarantula. It's a dead one, squashed thin and blood-dried in the middle of the road. Even though it's dead it still makes my spine tingle to look at it. Those thick hairy legs. The prickly hairs on its big back. I poke it with a stick I find on the side of the road, then slide one end of the stick under its body. The weight of the thing makes me feel nauseous, but I don't do what my instincts tell me—I don't drop the stick and back away. With the stick I move the tarantula over the asphalt until it's in the middle of a tire-worn part of the road. I walk over to the side of the road and stand in the dry grass. I don't have to wait long for a car to come by; soon dad drives up in grandpa's old brown BMW, with grandpa sitting in the passenger seat. Standing there watching grandpa's car come closer, I remember what he'd said about the car after he'd picked us up from the airport the other day: "This car's older than you, Charlie."

"How can a car be older than me?" I'd said. "Cars aren't alive."

"Clever boy," grandpa'd said.

It'd felt good to be called clever by my grandpa. Sitting in the back seat, I couldn't help but smile to myself as I watched the shaggy tops of palm trees pass outside the open window. I tried to think back to the last time dad complimented me about something, but gave up before we'd reached grandpa's street.

"What're you doing, son?" dad says now as he brings grandpa's car to a stop. His hairy arm hangs out the open window. I can't see his eyes, just the dark shields of his silver aviators.

"Nothing," I say.

"Want a ride?"

"No."

Dad laughs. "Lighten up. It was a joke. I can practically see the house from here. Come back pretty soon, alright? It's starting to get dark."

Grandpa leans his head forward and smiles at me from the passenger seat. "Having fun, Charlie?"

I shrug. "Yeah."

"He's a kid," dad says. "All he knows is fun."

The tires begin to roll, and the tarantula becomes an even sadder sight than before.

Back at grandpa's, dad's sitting on the front porch in one of the wicker rocking chairs. He's smoking a cigarette and drinking his whatever glass of whiskey. I climb the steps and ask where grandpa is.

"Resting," dad says.

"Why's he rest so much?"

Dad looks over at me like I'd said something stupid. "He's old, Charlie. Old people need their rest."

I push open the screen door and enter the house. I pass through the living room and look for something to eat in the kitchen. I break a banana off from the bunch and eat it quickly. Here the bananas are smaller and sweeter than the ones back home. I break off another one and eat it while following a trail of tiny ants on the floor. The trail ends at the kitchen table. The ants are spiraling up one of the wooden legs. They're feasting on a bowl of half-eaten papaya, just covering the fruit like bees do honey.

"Dad!" I say, running to the screen door. "There're ants in the kitchen!"

"Shit," dad mutters. He pushes the screen door open and hurries inside.

"Who's papaya is that?" I ask.

"Grandpa's," dad says.

"Why'd he leave it out?"

"What's with all the questions, Charlie? Let me be for a minute while I clean this damn mess up."

In the morning dad asks me if I want to go to the beach with him and Christie.

"Who's Christie?"

"The lady next door," he says.

Before we leave for the beach, dad introduces me to Christie. She shakes my hand and speaks to me in a jittery voice that makes me think of butterflies. She's pretty, but not as pretty as mom was. Her eyes are blue like mom's too, but a different kind of blue, a blue like the shallow water above a tropical reef.

I ask dad if grandpa's coming. He shakes his head. He's got his aviators on again, and a cooler in his hand that I'm pretty sure is filled with beers. He walks side by side with Christie along the road. I follow a little ways behind.

Christie shows us a narrow walking trail off the side of the road that leads under the trees. Thick roots cover the ground, going every which way. The air feels nice and cool in the shade.

"What are these big trees called?" I ask to no one in particular.

"Banyan trees," Christie says. Her voice sounds better now than before, steadier.

"They look fun for climbing," I say.

Dad built me a treefort a long time ago, back when mom was still alive and he was still happy. The rain ruined it a few years back, warping the wood so that it was no longer safe to walk on. Dad had used the word "dilapidated." I wasn't sure what the word meant, so I looked it up in the dictionary at the school library the next day. I learned that it meant a building or object in a state of disrepair. After mom died, that's sort of how I think of dad. My dilapidated dad.

When we get back to the house from the beach, I say bye to Christie and head up the stairs. Inside, grandpa's sitting in his armchair and watching something on the TV.

"Hi grandpa," I say.

"Charlie," grandpa says. "Hi. Did you have a good day?"

Grandpa points the remote and the TV goes black.

"Yeah," I say. "I rented a boogie-board."

"You did, did you? I bet that was fun."

"It was. Want to play chess?"

"Chess? Now? You never get tired, do you boy?"

"I'm twelve," I say.

Grandpa laughs. "Good point. Alright then. Let's see if you can beat a senior citizen."

I watch grandpa's thin arms tense as he pushes himself up from his chair. I see his bones under the skin, and dark spots on the skin. He shuffles his slippers over the mocha-colored carpet. He's wearing a red Hawaiian shirt today—it's always a different Hawaiian shirt—with the same loose olive-colored slacks he seems to wear every day.

"Fetch the chessboard, Charlie."

"Where is it?"

"Don't you remember?" Grandpa lets out a long sigh as he lowers himself into the wooden chair at the kitchen table. I point at one of the cabinets under the sink, and grandpa smiles, nods his head. I open the cabinet and find nothing but a stack of pots and pans, plastic containers.

"It's not here," I say.

"Shoot," grandpa says. "It must be in the other one. Try the cabinet to your left."

I open the cabinet. "Here it is," I say.

"I knew it was somewhere," grandpa says.

I move the chessboard and the pieces over to the table and start setting up the black pieces when grandpa says, "Wait a minute. Stop. You be white."

"You sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. I'm your grandpa."

So I start, trying to put my queen straight to work, along with my bishops and horses for backup. My strategy is simple: attack. In four moves I get grandpa in check and then take one of his horses. Two moves later I take his queen.

"Darn it!" he says. "Why didn't I see that?"

I feel bad for taking his pieces so easily. After I get him in checkmate, grandpa stares at the board, slowly shaking his head.

"You've gotten too good for me, Charlie. You must've been practicing back home."

"No," I say, realizing my mistake too late.

"No? I've gotten that bad?"

"What's wrong with grandpa?"

"What do you mean what's wrong with grandpa? He's old. We already went over this." Dad's smoking a cigarette and drinking his whatever glass of whiskey. He's staring at the darkening sky. The horizon has a line of deep purple.

"I mean he can't really play chess anymore. Like he forgot how or something."

Dad sighs, sips his whiskey. "He's got Alzheimer's, okay Charlie?"

I know that word, have heard it used before. I lower myself into the second wicker rocker. "He forgets things," I say.

Dad nods. "It's not getting better. He shouldn't be living alone, it's not safe, and as for driving, well, he shouldn't be doing that at all."

"Is that why it took so long getting here from the airport?"

"He took a few wrong turns," dad says.

"How long has he had it?"

"Who knows? Could've had it for decades. But it's only getting worse. That much I'm certain of."

Dad pauses to light another smoke. Above the porch railing, the sky is as black as dirt. The purple on the horizon is fading quickly. There's the sound of crickets chirping in the brush behind the house.

"I first noticed it from our phone conversations," dad says, exhaling smoke from his mouth. "He started repeating himself more and

more until—until it was pretty obvious."

I'm finishing a bowl of frosted mini-wheats out on the porch when dad tells me he's going to the market.

"Wanna come?"

I get in the front seat. "Seat's taken, Charlie," dad says.

I don't even ask. Dad backs out of the driveway. He stops the car alongside the road and turns the radio on. "Break on through to the other side!" he sings, batting the steering wheel with his hands. He keeps glancing at the house next door to grandpa's. Exotic plants with large fronds hide the windows of this house. Dad honks the horn two times quickly, and soon Christie comes running down the driveway. I listen to her sandals smack the concrete. She's wearing a flower-patterned skirt and a faded yellow t-shirt. She's got a black purse slung around her shoulder, and she's smiling and waving her hands as she runs. She looks happy to see us. Too happy.

"Hi Charlie!" she says.

"Hi Christie."

I watch Dad lean over and push open the passenger door for her. "Thanks for giving me shotgun," Christie says to me as she gets in. She smells like shampoo and cigarettes. Dad puts the car in gear and off we go to the market.

When we get there, Christie and dad share a cart and slowly walk the aisles. In the produce section I try and imagine Christie eating her share of fruits and vegetables, but have a hard time. Maybe a carrot or two.

Dad's grabbing papayas and mangos and bananas for grandpa and me. Smiling, Christie watches him place items in the shopping cart. In the health and cosmetics aisle, dad gets some pills to help him sleep, while Christie gets something called a nasal decongestant.

"What's that for?" I ask. "Something for your nose?"

"How'd you know that?" Christie says, acting surprised. I shrug, which makes her laugh. "My sinuses are acting up again," she says.

"How come?"

Christie looks at me for what seems an unusually long time. "I'm not entirely sure," she finally says. "It might have something to do with my immune system. Do you know what that is?"

I nod. "It's what keeps you from getting sick. Your disease fighters."

"That's right!" Christie says. "Gee, you're smart."

I shrug. "Hey dad, maybe we should get grandpa some ginkgo biloba. It's supposed to be good for your memory."

Dad shakes his head without looking at me. "Grandpa's past that stage," he mutters.

"He's the most level-headed kid," I hear dad say as we're waiting in a checkout line. "Must've got it from his mother."

"You're married?" Christie asks.

"Not anymore," dad says. "She passed away, a few years ago."

"I'm so sorry," Christie says. But her body seems to slacken again, like she's more relieved than sorry.

All paid up, I follow them out the door. The AC ducts from the ceiling ruffle my hair and wrinkle my shirt with a refreshing blast of cool air.

"How long have you been in Hawaii?" I ask Christie as we're walking back through the parking lot towards grandpa's car. Christie looks down at me, her eyes about as big as a frog's.

"About two years," she says.

"Were you born here?" I ask.

"Oh, no. I was born in California."

"What brought you to Hawaii?"

"You're full of questions, aren't you?" Christie looks from me to dad, who's pushing the cart. The wheels rattle over the asphalt. Two of the wheels shake like they might fall off at any second.

"Should've named him George he's so curious," dad says. He stops the cart and opens the trunk. He's got all the grocery bags inside before Christie or I can help. He shuts the trunk and pushes the shopping cart into the back of another shopping cart.

"Hawaii's where I had my honeymoon," Christie tells me.

"You're married?" I ask.

"Not anymore. He's back in California. Things didn't work out between us."

"How'd you get your house?"

"With the divorce money." She suddenly laughs. It sounds like a hiccup. "I can't believe I'm having this conversation with a kid. It's so surreal."

Dad's walking back towards the car now. He's in sandals and khaki shorts, a loose-fitting t-shirt. He's starting to move like a local, like he's been on island time for years. His skin's already turning brown.

"Must've done well," I say to Christie.

"Pardon me?"

"To get the house."

"Oh yes." She laughs again. "He's an attorney."

"Why'd you break up?"

Christie looks down at me and smiles. Her eyes look sad. I've seen a similar look in dad's eyes. "That's a question I'd rather try and forget, sweetie."

When we get back to grandpa's house I find him sitting in the living room in his armchair again. He's watching a report on the weather. The weatherman says there's an eighty-percent chance of showers tomorrow throughout the day.

"Hi grandpa," I say.

Grandpa jerks his head towards me. "Charlie, where'd you go?"

"To the market with dad."

"Oh, that's right. The market. Get some good stuff?"

"Yeah. Got my favorite cereal."

"You did, did you? Good for you. Where's your dad?"

"He's outside talking to Christie."

"Christie?"

"Your neighbor."

"Oh, that's right. Christie."

"What do you think about staying here," dad says.

We're back on the front porch, watching another day slip away. Dad's smoking and sipping his whatever glass of whiskey.

"Staying here?" I say.

"That's what I said," dad says. He takes a good sip of his whiskey.

"Like live here?"

"That's the game plan."

"What about all our stuff back home? The trailer? Your truck? Your job?"

"We'll make a trip back to sell the big things we can't take with us. Then we'll bring the rest here. Don't worry so much, Charlie. It's not good for a kid."

"Does grandpa know?"

"Grandpa's fine with the idea." Dad takes a drag from his cigarette. He laughs. "Know what he said? He said an extended family reunion beats a retirement home any day."

If that's supposed to be funny, I don't laugh. "What about school?" I ask.

"Don't worry about it," dad says. "I'll get you enrolled at the best one in town."

"There's probably only one."

Dad sips his whiskey again. "I thought you'd be thrilled, Charlie. Everyone wants to live in Hawaii. It's paradise here."

"I like Hawaii fine. But I don't know anyone here. I'd have to start all over."

Dad lets out a long sigh. We sit there in silence for a minute or two, listening to the crickets out back. Dad gets up from the rocker.

"I'm going over to see Christie," he says. "Go to sleep soon, alright? We'll talk more about this later."

I nod, and dad disappears down the porch stairs. I stare at the darkening sky, thinking about things. When I get up I take dad's empty glass with me into the house. In the living room the TV's on, but grandpa's gone. I take dad's glass into the kitchen and rinse it in the sink. Before I can leave the kitchen the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. I can hear grandpa in his room down the hallway. He's muttering something that I can't make sense of.

"Grandpa?" I call out. Silence. I stand in the kitchen for a minute without moving. When the muttering starts back up again, I tiptoe across the living room carpet towards the screen door and go back outside.

I sit on the front porch for a long time. The crickets in the brush behind the house is the only sound I hear. Goosebumps soon cover my arms from the cool night air. I rock back and forth in the wicker chair in an effort to stay warm. I think of my sweatshirt inside the house but I'm afraid to get it. I realize I hadn't turned the TV off like I'd planned to.

To keep my mind off the fact that my body's cold, I think about what dad had told me. I imagine myself growing up in Hawaii, and then I tell myself that after high school, if I don't like living in Hawaii I can go to college anywhere, assuming my grades stay good and I can get a scholarship. This train of thought brings me comfort as I wait for dad to come back from Christie's.

But he doesn't come back, and I'm shivering from the cold of night no matter how ferociously I rock in the wicker chair. Finally I stand up and walk over to the screen door. I pull it open and step inside. I slip off my shoes and then, after zapping off the TV, head for my room with my hands over my ears, just in case.



Torridian Poets & Writers Hall of Fame

"Preserving the culture of literature."

TL Publishing Group

Please join TL Publishing Group in welcoming the first official members of the Torridian Hall of Fame. These eight writers were all published in Volumes I - IV of the Torrid Literature Journal. They were chosen through a voting process where they received the highest votes in their category. These writers are from all over the world and each one of them has a unique style that draws attention to their literary craft. If you are unfamiliar with their work, make sure you get ahold of the volume in which their work appeared. You can purchase a copy of our journals at any time by visiting our online store.

Additionally, please visit our website to learn more about our 2013 Torridian Hall of Fame members, including their writing history and other places where you can get read their work.

Our Hall of Fame serves as a platform to preserve, honor and promote the growth and culture of literature. Follow us as we prepare to vote for our next season of inductees for Volumes V - VIII of the Torrid Literature Journal. Voting starts October 1, 2013 and runs through February 28, 2014. More information will be provided closer to the start of the next voting season.

VOL. I

Rediscovering the Passion

Changming Yuan
Poem: Me & Sand
Votes received: 226

Bio: Changming Yuan, 4-time Pushcart nominee and author of *Chansons of a Chinaman* (Leaf Garden, 2009) and *Landscaping* (Flutter Press, 2013), grew up in rural China and published several monographs before moving to Canada as an international student. With a PhD in English from the University of Saskatchewan, Yuan currently works as a private tutor in Vancouver, where he co-edits/publishes *Poetry Pacific* with his teenager poet son Allen Qing Yuan (Poetry submissions welcome at editors.pp@gmail.com). Recently interviewed by PANK, Yuan has poetry appear in *Barrow Street*, *Best Canadian Poetry* (2009, 2012), *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Threepenny Review*, *Torrid literature Journal* and 700 other literary journals/anthologies across 27 countries.

Chris Castle
Story: Collection
Votes received: 107

Bio: Chris has been published close to 400 times. His latest work has been published in the new *Horror Zine* book. At the moment he is working on a novel set in Greece, where he works and a collection of poetry. He can be reached at chriscastle76@hotmail.com for feedback.

VOL. II

The Bare Naked Truth

Erica Marchant
Poem: Void
Votes received: 21

Bio: Erica Marchant is a poet from Melrose, Massachusetts.

T. Fox Dunham
Story: Dancing at Albie's Pub at the End of the World
Votes received: 97

Bio: T. Fox Dunham resides outside of Philadelphia, PA - author and historian. He's published in nearly 200 international journals and anthologies. His first novel, *The Street Martyr* will be published by Out of the Gutter Books, followed up by *Searching for Andy Kaufman* from PMMP in 2014. He's a cancer survivor. His friends call him fox, being his totem animal, and his motto is: Wrecking civilization one story at a time.

VOL. III

The Forgotten Art

Rebecca Wright
Poems: Haunted | Progression
Votes received: 45

Bio: 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 polydactyl cat, *Huckleberry Fynnigan*. She plans to receive her M.F.A. in Creative Writing and in the future, change the world.

Richard Hartwell
Stories: Disposable Wedding | Switch
Votes received: 166

Bio: Rick Hartwell is a retired middle school English teacher living in Moreno Valley, California. He believes in the succinct, that the small becomes large; and, like the Transcendentalists and William Blake, that the instant contains eternity. Given his "druthers," if he's not writing, Rick would rather be still tailing plywood in a mill in Oregon. He has been published in: *Empirical Magazine*, *Newtownner Magazine*, *Birmingham Arts Magazine*, *Camel Saloon*, *Bamboo Forest*, *Stray Branch*, *Everyday Fiction*, and many others.

VOL. IV

The D.N.A. of a Poet

Jose Paolo Calcetas
Poems: Fidelity | A Butterfly My Hands Can Never Hold
Votes received: 256

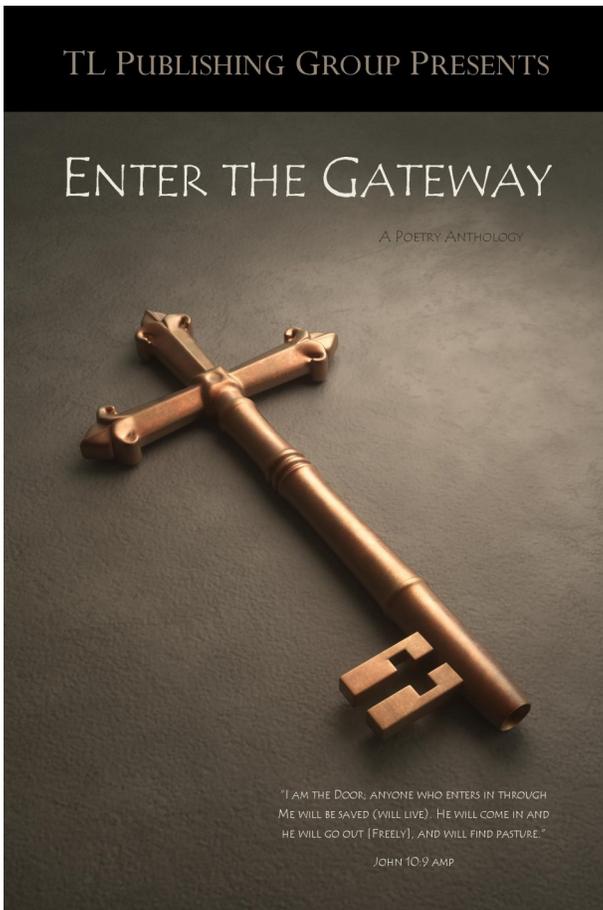
Bio: Jose Paolo Cheeseman Calcetas, is working as a writer for George "E.R." Ejercito Estregan, Governor of the Province of Laguna and multi-awarded actor/champion public servant in the Philippines. He began writing and won his first competition at the age of 8. He has been a scholastic journalist for 17 years and is the founding president of *Pass the Passion*, a journalism-based organization that conducts free trainings and seminars for young and old writing enthusiasts. He has won several international recognitions such as: Special Citation, 3rd Dokdo International Essay Competition, and many others.

Roberta Lynn Rosencutter
Story: Brother
Votes received: 108

Bio: Roberta Lynn Rosencutter received her bachelor's degree in English from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Tx. She is currently working in the circulation department of her local library. Her work has been featured in *Humid Literary Journal* and also *Torrid Literature Journal*, where she is a Hall of Fame member for her fiction work.

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.

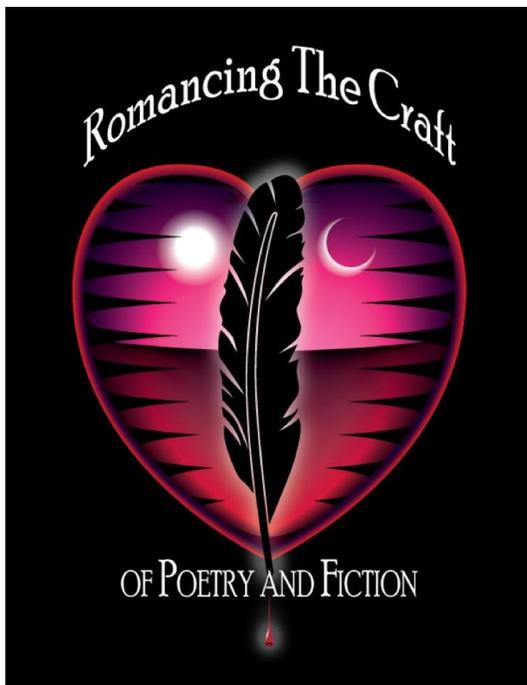
These poems will inspire readers to seek out this 'Hope' so that they may personally experience what this Hope can do for them and those they love.

2ND ANNUAL ROMANCING THE CRAFT OF POETRY & FICTION CONTEST

Our submission period for our 2nd Annual Romancing the craft of Poetry & Fiction Contest has officially ended. We received several hundred submissions from writers located around the world. We want to humbly thank everyone for their participation and support.

We look forward to reviewing all of the entries and announcing the official winners in the Torrid Literature Journal - Volume VIII Revolution. The three winners will receive special recognition along with a USD cash prize.

To learn more, please visit our website.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

TL Publishing Group is now accepting submissions for the Torrid Literature Journal - Volume VIII Revolution

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. We look forward to the reading experience.



Dear Reader,

Where would we be without the artists who boldly document every laugh, tear, rant, scream, dream, fantasy, and vision, the artists who publicize their journey of revolution and victory? In this life, there is more than what there already is. There is something beneath the mere surface that we can't see with our regular eyes. There is always a larger picture. Artists get this. They get it. Great writers have the striking ability to readjust our lens scope on the world around us, bringing certain things in and out of focus. They understand that in our attempt to survive daily life, it is easy to misinterpret the overall picture because we're often too focused on the individual pieces. Literature gives us the clarity we often lack because writers see everything from all angles.

We can humbly admit that if artists and the culture of art were to fade away then we would lose everything, specifically, our ability to travel through time and space. Only artists carry the unique ability to capture a moment and freeze it in perfect time through a piece of art, whether it is a poem, story, song, dance, or painting. Nothing else can connect to our senses the way a great piece of literature or art can.

Furthermore, a dream is not just a dream. It is an outline, a prelude that fuels hope. This hope, coupled with faith, compels us to make the daring move to set a goal, which is followed with an action. This cycle creates a ripple effect that everyone gets to benefit from. The Torrid Literature Journal all started with a dream that led to a vision. That vision, cultivated with faith and hope, grew to become goals. These goals became supported by actions, actions that brought us to this point here and now, where, seven journals later, we have received over 1,500 submissions from writers all over the world. We have also completed two annual contests and the successful launch of our Hall of Fame. In addition, we have the upcoming release of our Christian anthology, Enter the Gateway. Now we are preparing to close out another astonishing year and we have you, our fans, supporters, and followers to thank for this. This type of growing success would not be possible without two valuable components of the equation: the writers who fill up our pages with phenomenal material and amazing readers like you. Together we are supporting the culture of literature. Everyone wins.

With that said, we hope by the time you finished reading this publication that you are fueled with enough inspiration and motivation to pursue whatever dream, goal, or item from your 'bucket list' that rests on your path because there is something to be said about victory. Whether it is victory in terms of overcoming something or finishing something up, there is this feeling of accomplishment that washes over us. Especially when we achieve a dream or goal. It's a feeling that was not there before. However, none of us can have a victory without first going through a struggle, battle, or revolution even.

So who is in need of a revolution? Join us again in the Torrid Literature Journal - Volume VIII Revolution.

- Editorial Staff



Open Mic Night

Price: Free!

All artists are invited to sign up and perform.

Special Guest Host
R.J. Kerker

When: Saturday, July 13, 2013

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

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

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.

Visit us during open mic night to learn more about the 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

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.