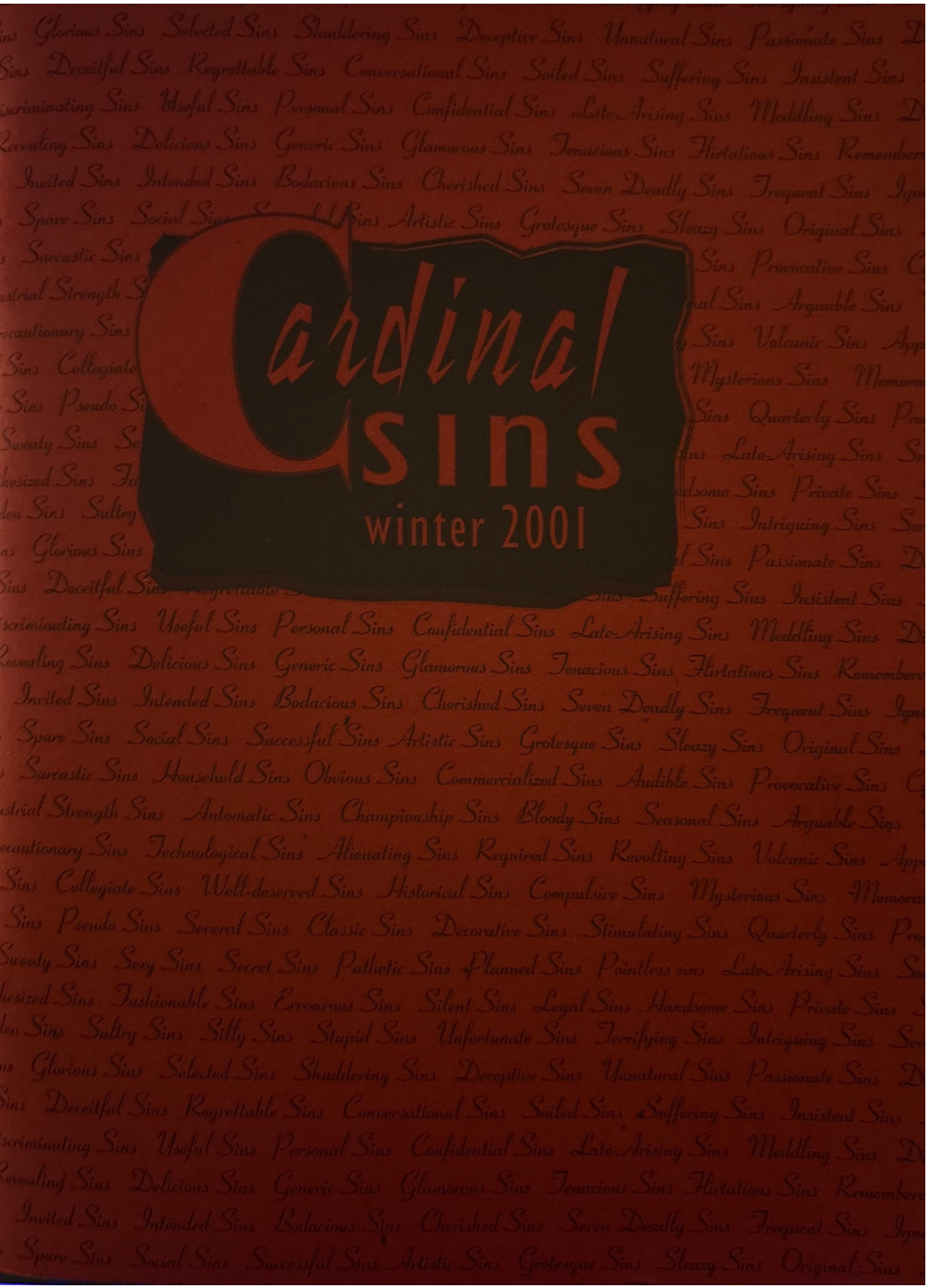


Cardinal Sins

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*Congratulations to Matthew Hill, Leigh Grant, Todd J. Henson, and Nate Scott; winners of the poetry, short story, photography, and art work awards respectively.

**Appeared previously in Earth's Daughters.

Reluctant Spring

The earth will not wipe the sleep from her eyes:
Won't heave the gray blanket from her breast,
Diffidently sends shoots but no blooms--
Fodder for rabbits--
When what is needed is a rage of color.

Nor do we:

Though we stand poised to seize our lives again,
We cling to the black and white dreams,
Drear mouthings of old men who misled us--
Sedatives for sheep--
When what is needed is pounding of the blood.

Mary Troester



Re-Birth Stephen Skalnican

Ocean Liner

Every night he sits in the same old, tattered lounge chair. Its oranges, greens, and yellows are torn to shreds: horizontal lines refusing to conform and running amok into frazzled zigzags. They border the brown rusted metal framework that creaks whenever he sits. The chair settles into the fresh wet sand. The tide has gone out, and he sinks into its footprint.

He does this everyday at just about the same time. The light begins to fade, and sunworshipper give up the ghost and walk slowly up the stairs burned and happy he sits. He squints his eyes in the dusk, and wipes his bifocals on his bermuda shorts clearing away the salt's spray. And he sits: Bright plaid linen shirt, print bermuda shorts, bifocals, a beer nestled into its Styrofoam holder, and that old lounge chair.

The last of the day's heat makes little beads of sweat pop up on his balding scalp. He is always a bit rosy up there with a touch of sunburn illiminating his gray thinning locks. And every day the graying head is turned towards the horizon in the dimming evening. As the stars come out, and blue replaces black, he sits; little diminutive eyes blinking from behind thick lenses gazing at the black line where ocean meets the sky.

And at just about the same time, every night, the lights of the ocean liner flicker out on that flat backdrop of sea and sky. He strains his ears and hears the drone of its horn. Those little eyes strain even further, the little crows feet marring his weathered face grow deeper, and that's when it happens. He sees those ships. Grand ocean liners, black on bottom, then white, then a regal red stripe. Just like the movies. Titanic. The round windows that line the sides of the ship are like eyes. He gazes into them. Each round ocular reveals a different face. In the first, a young boy waves at him. It's his grandson, from Michigan. And then you can see that man slowly raise his hand and wave at the sea. We all wonder why he does this. Now you know.

In the next window he sees his daughter. She smiles revealing brilliant white teeth just like her mother's. She is tan, golden brown, and has enjoyed the seaside too, it seems. His heart soars, and the man smiles. He settles back into that chair sinking deeper into the sand; into the ocean's footprint. It feels good, cold, and refreshing. And soon, when it gets too dark and the oceanliners and shrimp boats have turned out the lights for the night, he sees his daughter take her son by the hand and lead him away from the window. The ocean liner's red stripe fades from his view as it makes its way back north.

And every night, as just about the same time, he feels just a little bit sad. That smile, the wave, the little beads of sweat on his head, the sand caught between his toes, and the clouded lens of his bifocals follow him back into his little cottage. And turning out his bedside lamp, he settles in for the night too. You'll be able to see him out there tomorrow night: same time, same place, same chair. Same ocean.

Leigh Grant

Untitled

From voodoo blue seas
water kissed rain,
a hurricane refrain breaks
-Heaven-fire-pentameter-
as black gods
cry Miami
through twilight.

Erik Trump

Runaway

I slave for miles
as partners lose me
to the luscious jungle
facedown in reeds that sway
leeches cling to my damp skin
the wrath of white
my only fear

Carrie Shay

Tiger

I want to know
The way you see me
Would I even
Recognize myself?
Or would it just be
Me staring back
At me
Wild with
Contempt-
Hiding behind
Cat's eyes.

Gretchen Victoria Abels Toth



Tiger Melissa Martin

Desert at Midnight

The breeze sharpened itself on the sand,
blowing cleanly through her mind,
filling her with all the thoughts
one finds in the desert at midnight
when each grain of sand
holds some indefinite significance
for the future, the past
and the “happening right now.”
A few hours ago,
the sky was painted in brilliant splendor
now faded to a semi-cloudless
navy-blue, lightening only
by the appearance of the virgin moon.
Letting the fire burn itself down
to bare cinder,
she folds back the top
of her sleeping bag, crawls in,
and pulls it over her head,
becoming a caterpillar in a cocoon of warmth,
knowing she will not emerge form this
a butterfly.

Gina Mezzano

Southern Border

In slumber I complimented your Texas eyes,
those Alamo hourglasses opened wide
to catch my awe,
as you paid back my kind word
with a kiss,
a lush oasis of
strawberry flavored chap-stick
to prevent dry desert lips.

In awakened bliss I pondered my vision.
Why had I mentioned the Friendship State
of your eyes?
Could their blue expanse have brought to mind
visions of the open, clear skies of the southern plains.
Or had I been made aware of their inviting look,
given to me unnoticed at least once.
Asking to cross the southern border
of friend and lover;
A journey to desire in the dusty streets
of a small Mexican village.

Dion Mindykowski



Turky Chad White

Adios

A proud descendant of the Aztecs
Montezuma in disguise
A self-learned scholar
Speaking and singing in his native tongue

A diplomatic and respected community leader
Peacemaker to all

Dreamt of educating his children
Beating his drum to the tune of
"progress through education"
Vision accomplished
Chanting drums rejoiced

On his 84th November he visited his medicine man
With a raging headache
Drums echoed frantically on this cold dispirited day

A brain scan...
A tumor
A lingering malady

Beginning at sunrise he methodically took care of his chores
Serene drums were peacefully tapping on his last twilight

His final note declared rather than burden his family
With caring for an ailing elder
Wisdom told him to end his fulfilled life
His fate became known in the dusk of his being

Fading drums were solemnly beating
As loved ones bowed and read his final
Farewell

Veronica Mandy Aguirre

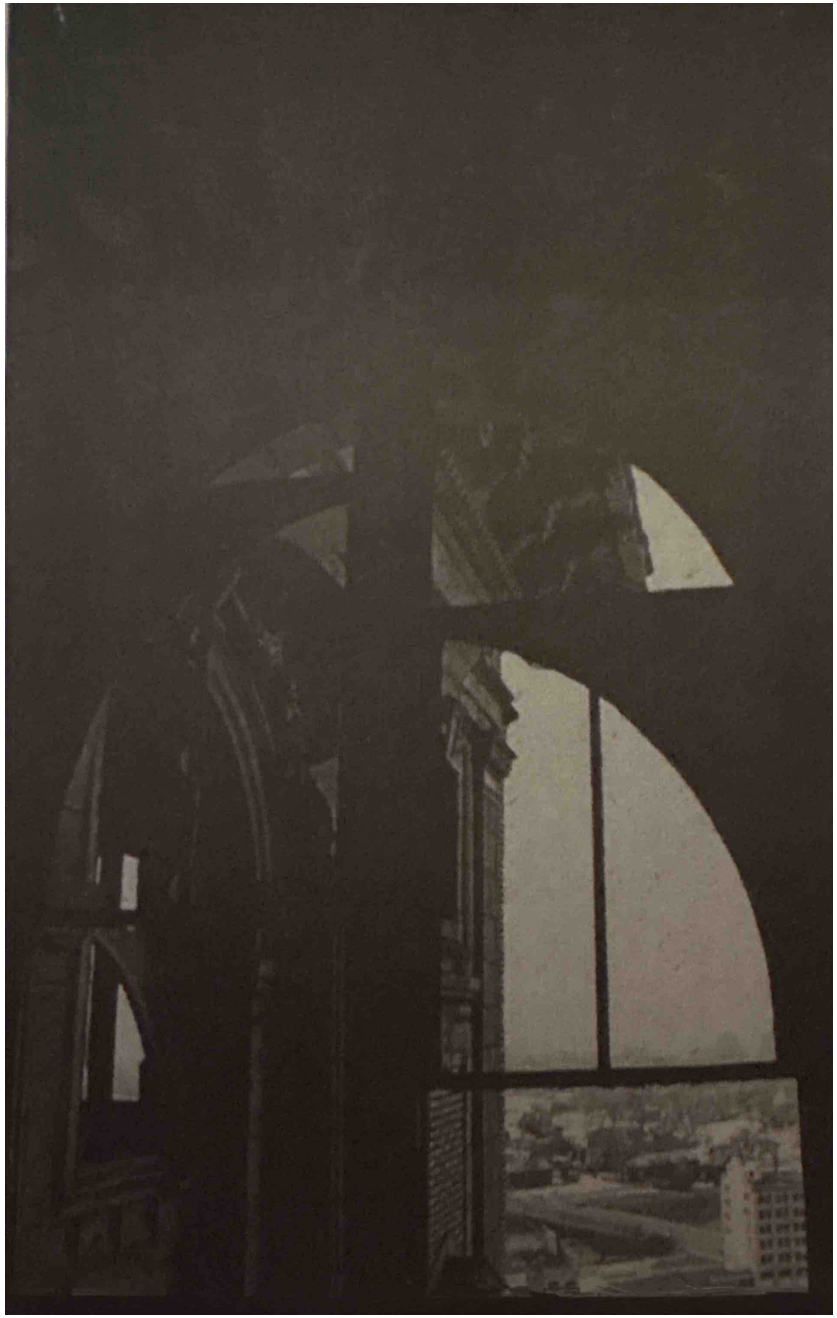
My Sanctuary

Quietly I sit, jotting down thoughts, making observations,
Trying to saddle creativity.
People whisper all around, no one voice
Rises above the rest,
Feet shuffle gently across the carpet,
Such a soothing sound.
Ghosts dance behind dozens of one-walled rooms,
Appearing, reappearing, disappearing.

The room is filled with small, square boxes, samples of
A hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand lives.
All beg to be opened, to be looked upon,
To be savored and renewed.
The room smells of knowledge, of learning, of understanding,
The air crackles with their magic.

Row afer row, shelf after shelf,
Each assigned a seat.
Everyone is here, Chaucer, Wordsworth, Frost,
Young William the Playwright.
All sit quietly waiting, watching, hoping
To be chosen next.
They live only for this, their sole purpose now,
To pass on to another.

Don Cowper Jr.



Last Stop Todd J. Henson



Untitled William N. Raymaker

Even Here I Am Alone

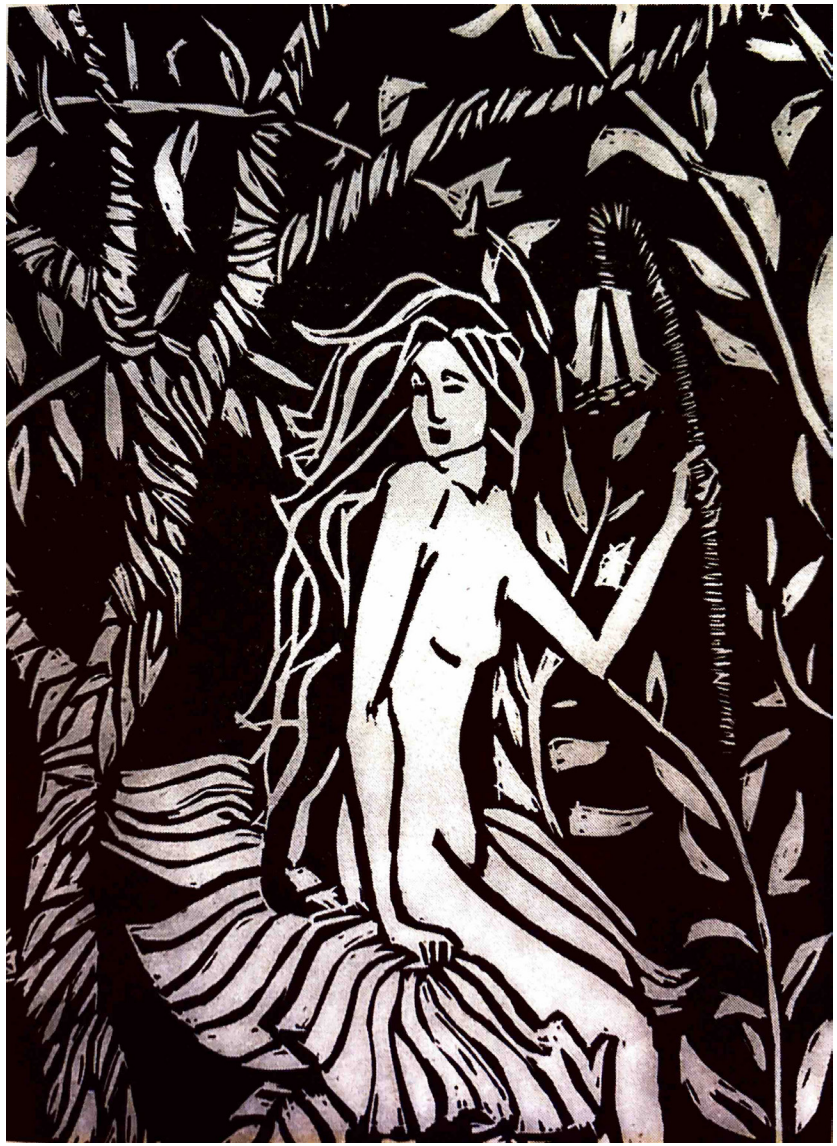
The pipe organ blooms, bells chime
Sitting alone again
Keeping up appearances
The perfect family
Except the pew is empty
Gazing around, watching sons, fathers, husbands
in their suits, ties, black polished shoes
They beam with pride
Arms around their wives
Children on their laps
Looking around aware of myself, like the elderly widow
who sits in front, behind, and next to me
Look away, look out the stained glass windows
Pretty to look at, not practical
I can not see out, only the images of crowns, crosses, candles
streak through the vivid, red, blue, purple
Candles flicker, acolytes watch, wait for their cue
The choir sings, I don't know the song, though my tears do.
Ushers stand waiting to collect passing the plate down the row
Old men, women, children, youth dig deep into their pockets
searching for envelopes, cash, coin
clanking in the metal plate as it passes
Announcements made, prayer given, sermon spoken.
"Songs for a New Day" my daughter sings
Her choir robe hangs on her like an angel draped in gold.
Flags cascade down above her from the ceiling's high-wooden beams
"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you"
hangs on the wall next to where she stands
Where is this promise I seek?
Pews now crowded; cologne, perfume, lotion fill the air
Babies cry on and on, take the screamer out
Smiling to myself I hear my brother jokingly say
"Shake the baby"
Looking up I hear the words "How good Lord to be here."
Even here, I am all alone

Rae Atwood

Choosing Your Name

Self
determined.
This is the price of several pounds of coffee.
It is your name, your father's name,
your mother's husband's name,
the name of grand and great-grand fathers
stretching back through history.
This is a gold bangle on your left wrist,
a leather cuff on your ankle.
If you wish to determine
your own name
you must fast in the hills for three days
you must collect 6 drops of menstrual blood in a cup
you must type 85 words per minute
you must run the Boston marathon.
Ask the spirit of your mother's
mother's mother to advise you
but never ask permission of anyone
or you will lose it.
If you ask your name
to declare itself
it will answer you at midnight
when you hold your husband's head
in your lap
it will answer you at 4 P.M.
and make you drop the shirt you are ironing
it will infiltrate your briefcase
appearing at the top of a memo from your boss.
Choose your name.
Choose your destiny.

Dr. Judith Kerman



A Midsummers Night Michelle Hughey

Living Oakland

It is just too—

The day bracketed by bed and bed
bathing and bathing
robing and unrobing
brushing and brushing

Within the parentheses: choosing and buying
sweeping and washing
breathing and eating
driving and delivering

Gertrude, there is no “here” here;
It is just too—
It is nothing.

Mary Troester

january saginaw snow

“Light takes the Tree, but who can tell us how?” Theodore Roethke

light from the west sky
alights like birds
on countless branches,

straggling from trunks
skirted by snow,
no—january saginaw snow.

was roethke really here?
become something here?
see this same sky, trees, snow?

that’s what they say,
behold his old grave!
born, walked, talked, and buried here!

but see why i can’t believe it?
in the january saginaw snow’s cold
with the straggling branches and all?

see why those
pulitzer prize winning words
seem like a dream,

like light alighting,
something not snow in this cold,
like birds perching in winter?

but, then,
there’s the lgith taking the tree.
how, indeed.

Matthew Hill



Midnight Sky Jessica L. Hollister

Crossing-Over

Something in the moss,
growing, clinging for dear life
reminds me of that crowded,
mysterious pond,
stagnant
in the woods of my
childhood

temptation and
the subtle aromas of
a Carolina Spring
carried me into
the pulse of my youth,
those woods
evasive rhythm, mockingbirds

crossing over a creek
(the width of an entire foot)
and into those woods
I could smell the basil, tomato leaves,
marigold
Herb-garden dancing memories palms
resting in my hands,
faithful memory

crossing over that creek,
into the woods
smelling, feeling, sounding
and bursting of dogwoods and
Easter-time southern pride
even today
I somehow can feel that moss,
close to my cheek,
my pillow as I dream
of crossing greater waters

Leigh Grant

Lloyd's Song

At Alacan, the mountain wash,
does down the rock begin a flow,
and Sundrin falls a-in the fells,
to trees and brooks a-far below

And in this place, a-long ago,
the mountain birds on stony ledge,
did nest their babes and sing a-sing,
and call their chics a-to the ledge

The babes a-cried and then one said:
"too far a fall, too far for us,"
but mother bird a-coax, a-sing,
and down the fells the chics a-rush

Then open wings and flaps and such,
a-pull the babes a-to the sky,
and mountain birds, a-wash with joy,
a-see their children with a cry

And now they see, as you, as I,
a-why to leave a-fells, a-land,
while glistening a-loft, above,
the Sundrin-a at Alacan

Matthew Hill

Stone Picking

When glaciers receded, the stones remained,
Scattered on hillsides or buried in earth,
Witness that we are but tenants of time.

The rocky residue demands spring rituals:
A tractor-drawn wagon transversing the field,
A family dispersed, a task to be done.

Shoes fill with dirt, stones clatter in buckets,
Wagon wheels sink deep into soft earth,
No stone left to damage the combines.

Heaped stones, piled high on timeworn line fences,
washed clean by the rain, silently wait
As seedlings and harvest, then winters follow.

Spring plows uncover new crops of stones,
Silt-covered, once buried deep in the eons
Of time, before the moraines were ours.

Diane Boehm

Enduring Faith

The earth was getting cold as the night drew closer. Maria held her newborn daughter tightly in her arms as she tried to get some rest. She was feeling tired and uneasy about their pending escape. Her husband Pablo stood guard with his rifle in one hand watching his surroundings and listening for any movement in the darkness of the night. In his other hand he held a wooden crucifix while he prayed asking God to protect his beautiful wife and daughter from enemy danger. Distant gun shots could be heard echoing in the desolate terrain.

The Revolutionary War was raging in their homeland. Pablo had been serving as a messenger for Pancho Villa. Working for him for many years, Pablo had developed a strong and honest friendship with his commander. Pablo's mission in the war was to unravel the enemy's plan that they had against Pancho Villa and his men. Under the command of his superior, he was sent into the territory of the wrathful dictator Porfilio Diaz. It was there that he encountered and stole the enemy's most vital strategies, and was able to confiscate the enemy's maps. These maps outlined the National Government's strategy and contained the itinerary for each military movement. After stealing the maps, the dedicated messanger ran away from the enemy's territory towards teh rocky mountains; he could hear the firing of their guns. Had the young messanger moved a few seconds slower, he would have been assassinated by Diaz's men.

Upon returning to Villa's headquarters, he told his commander what he had overheard and gave him the valuable maps. With these, Villa was able to outsmart and conquer the enemy. Villa was proud of Pablo and granted him a hacienda with many mestizo servants and hundreds of acres of land. The loyal messanger was proud to be a war hero, and pleased that he aided the peons, the poor Mexican peasants, who desperately needed Villa's assistance.

He felt like a true man who was able to provide the best for his family. He was going to let his family, as well as Maria's family, move into the beautiful hacienda. It had alwasys been his dream to be able to provide for his extended family. Before he could even move into the hacienda though, word was out that the enemy was pursuing Pablo, the man who stole their plan. There were signs posted that said, "VILLA'S MESSANGER, WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE." The enemy had plans to kill Pablo and his family. Fearful of this, Pablo had no choice but to leave his country. This night, Pablo decided to make the dangerous escape.

"Maria, wake up," Pablo whispered in her ear. Maria jumped in shock as if the enemy had arrived. She opened her eyes and realized it was Pablo. "It's time to start moving north. Get the baby and let's go." Maria carefully wrapped Ana in her shawl and positioned her securely on her back.

They quickly packed a bag and begin traveling north on foot. Pablo knew that it was best to travel at night with the guiding light of the moon. In the bag that carefully hung from Pablo's broad shoulder were a few belongings including the priceless wooden crucifix, an heirloom that had been given to them by Pablo's grandmother. It was the same crucifix that his family had prayed to so many times before during his poverty stricken childhood. Pablo told Maria, "We prayed to the cross when we had nothing to eat and the Lord put food on our table. We cannot leave it behind."

Holding Ana, Maria followed her husband's deep footprints in the barren sand. She had been fearful and had many doubts about the escapes since the day she found out they had to flee their beloved Mexico. She was fearful of this unknown journey, and it made her sad to have to leave her house and family behind. She knew that this was best for them, but she was afraid of what would happen if they were to get caught by the ruling government. As they walked in the darkness, Maria held her black rosary tightly and prayed to God. She whispered, "Dear God, give our family strength, good health, and protect use from all danger. Amen."

Maria had been hesitant to go, but Pablo reassured her that this would be the best for them. She had always dreamed of seeing America. She had heard so many stories about it before, and was fascinated about the land that would offer them freedom; especially religious freedom because her faith was her strength. At the same time, however, Maria did not want to go illegally to America. She feared being captured along the way by the same soldiers that had nearly killed her loving husband. She worried what would happen to baby Ana if they were to get caught. She was born only two months ago and was such a blessing to their family. Maria and Ana were Pablo's pride and joy and now his motivating factor to leave his beloved homeland.

While they were walking down a trail Maria stopped and said to Pablo, "I don't know what I would do if we were captured or if the assailants took Ana from us. We need to keep praying to God asking him to give us strength." Maria held her black rosary securely in her brown hands.

Pablo stopped and looked at Maria remorsefully. She noticed that there were tears rolling down his cheeks. She listened as he spoke. "I know you are scared and that you don't want to leave, but if we stay in Mexico we would not be safe. The enemy wants me and they are determined to find and kill me. We can't live under cover for the rest of our lives, running from danger."

Her long black hair fell in front of her face as she cupped her hands. She began crying. Months after giving birth, Maria was emotionally depressed. She recalled an upsetting nightmare she had about a young woman who was escaping to America and who drowned crossing the Rio Grande leaving her four children orphans. Maria sobbed to Pablo, "I wish we didn't have to run. I want to be home enjoying our family and friends like we always did." Pablo rubbed her shoulders with his strong hands and kissed her on the forehead.

This wasn't what Pablo had intended for his family. He had what everyone wanted: a devoted wife and a beautiful newborn daughter. He shook his head and replied, "Maria, I wish we weren't in this situation either, but I had to make a living. I fought bravely for the poverty stricken peons. It was my duty to help Pancho Villa because if the National Government were to capture him, all the land and food he confiscated would have been taken away again from our people."

Maria, with all sincerity, replied to Pablo, "I understand, you did what you had to do." Maria knew this and felt distressed that her husband was the prime target of the enemy. She realized that when they did reach America they would have a better life, especially Ana.

They had only been gone for a month, but the pilgrimage seemed like it had been dragging on for years. Pablo and Maria had been walking for days and were very tired. Each step felt like they were carrying a load of bricks on their feet. Maria was

getting too weak to carry Ana. She had days in which she would fall into a depression and felt like she couldn't go on. She tried to hide this from Pablo because she didn't want to torment him with her affliction. One day she finally confessed to her husband, "Pablo, there's been gloomy days in which I want to quit running. Lately, there seems to be a black cloud following me and I don't want to continue. I try to shake myself out of this because I want to get to America with the baby and you."

It was upsetting to Pablo to see his wife so depressed. He replied, "You need to be strong to continue, think of Ana." Realizing that Maria was having a hard time, Pablo decided to stop for the night to let her rest.

While Maria was resting with Ana, Pablo went to hunt for some animals. That night the family ate rabbits and snakes for dinner. Cacti were cooked in a tin can over a blazing flame. The only fresh water they drank was water accumulated from the early morning dew.

Once again, they began their voyage at dusk. Pablo was tired and Maria was becoming weaker and sicker. The thought of eating was erased from her mind. This loss of appetite dried up her breast and she had to quit feeding Ana. The little food they had brought was fed to the baby to keep her as healthy as possible. Pable didn't let his wife know that he was getting tired and at times hopeless. He wanted to be brave and make his wife proud.

Pablo knew each time they stopped it was time wasted, but he knew that Maria was getting exhausted. Her eyes had dark circles and her health was taking a turn for the worse. One evening, they stopped to rest under a mesquite tree near a stream and a canyon. Pablo let Maria and Ana rest, while he kept guard. As he rested against the tree, he fell asleep and was dreaming that they had made it to America safe and sound. Just then he woke up in a sweat and realized that he was still in the desolate desert under the mesquite tree. He quickly looked to make sure that Maria and Ana were safe.

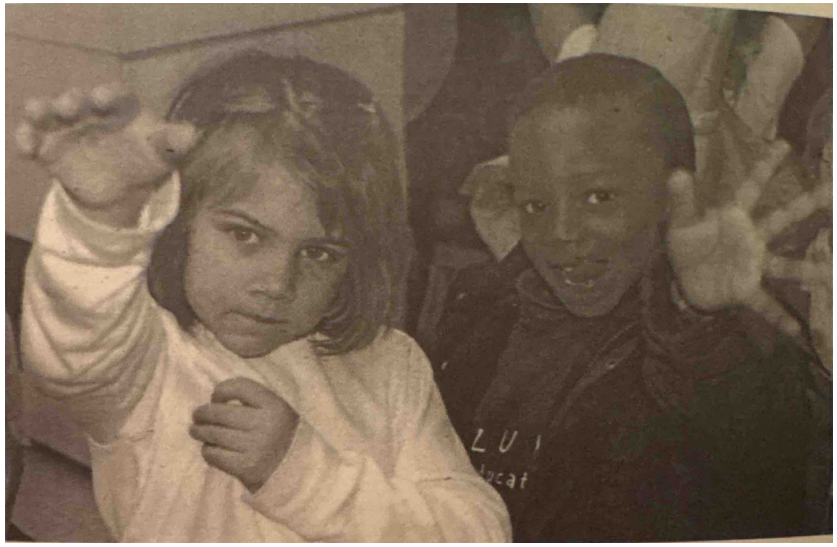
While they were resting, he decided to go and gather some cacti and hunt rattlesnakes and armadillos. He brought Maria back some water from the nearby stream to drink and cooked the snake over an open fire. Reading his map with the light of the fire, he figured that they were about twenty miles away from the United States-Mexico border. He looked over at his wife who was weak and fatigued. He took the wooden crucifix out of the bag, and held it in his hand praying to God to give them the strength they needed to make it to the United States. Looking at Maria and Ana, he felt the guilt in his heart that he had felt so many times before for putting his family through this dreadful journey.

They stayed for three days in this hidden canyon; it was the longest period of time they had rested. Maria was too ill to move. Pablo was tormented with the decision of whether to continue his journey, or wait and rest longer. On the third day, he went to gather more food and hunt for an animal of some kind to eat. As he was walking through the windswept desert, he heard a howling noise. He raised his rifle in defense and listened. He realized that it was Ana crying. He instantly knew something must be wrong because he had never heard Ana cry in such a loud and heard wenching way. He rushed back to where his loved ones were resting. He reached the canyon out of breath and his heard was pounding rapidly. He took Ana out of Maria's hands and Maria's hands fell limp and lifeless. Her fingers were cold and stiff with her black rosary carefully wrapped around them. Pablo sensed the end of Maria's pilgrimage had arrived. He fell to his knees holding Ana. He began crying for his wife, his companion, his best friend who had passed on to eternal life. The emptiness in his heart was overwhelming. He felt ashamed of his choices. He tried to be brave for Ana, but it was hard. He had just lost his beautiful wife. As he looked into Ana's dark brown eyes, he saw a mirror reflection of his wife.

It was then that he knew he had to have the courage to continue. He dug a grave for Maria, and as he held the sacred wooden crucifix high in the sky he knelt and prayed. Again, he was faced with another important decision. Should he leave the wooden crucifix on Maria's final resting place or should he take the heirloom with them on his journey? He looked at Ana, who he held securely in his arms. Ana gave her father an inspiring smile.

At that moment, he realized that Ana was all he had and he needed to be a brave father. She gave him hope to make it to the United States so they could live a better life just as Maria would have wanted them to. That evening he began his final journey with his precious daughter, who was wearing her mother's rosary around her neck.

Veronica Mandy Aguirre



Untitled Misato Fujita



Untitled Misato Fujita



Technology Shrugged Nate Scott

On The Way Home

stale smell of sentimentality
congestive sadness in the artery, on the road
home, paved for a few miles
dirt and dust and loose gravel,
a few more

roadside sighs limbs sag burden of
winds of
change grey
silhouettes against
backdrop of
the memory of
weathered joints creaks creeks
bending bends

“it’s going to rain,” she says
and when the wind blows I hear
them groan stillness
when you stop to notice
still they don’t want to sympathy

down by the pond

frozen here, and there
paralyzed cattails stick-in-the-mud
and the hawk
circle
cries out when you pick one
bet you’re standing on an arrowhead

up on the hill

brambles, tangled, histories, briars
graveyard of
compass quivers, where are you?
memories, hills ponds, raods, limbs, rains, circle home

Leigh Grant



Untitled Gabe Sauvie

Strung Out on Habit

Face fogged in the window,
he looks out
but doesn't see.
Every once in a while,
he looks down
to scribble a word in the marginalia
of a page already filled
with the meanderings of yesterday
and the day before.

Sick of grandmothers praying on jellybeans rosaries,
of the moral corset imposed on everyday life,
sick of the world and its open heart programing.

He's gone to scribble
and fill his pages from shore to shore,
to be alone in his desolation and his politics,
and to show that a common man
can survive without the world.

Gina Mezzano



Bela Nate Scott

One Night, Dreaming

When Johnny says it's time for another round of shots, the bar is swarmed by inebriated men and I can do nothing but pour out another six plastic coconuts full of pucker. "It's good, it's good." Everyone agrees. Now time to hit the keg, or some rum. We really need tequila. This light stuff takes too long to hit you. It was a Hawaiian party but all the regular guests had left, and now all that remained were the senseless drunks: those who found solace in drinking until the next morning and becoming best friends with whoever remained awake as long as they did. Each passing moment our eyes seemed to swell and close a little more, but through the slits of our eyes among the haze and blur, we could still distinguish that there was alcohol left--and that is what we were still there for. More shots, pucker, I guess. Finish off the daiquiri; yeah it's gone, but there is still rum and vodka. The pucker is gone now, and of course the key looms large at the end of the bar. People are leaving. I don't care.

I wish some girls were still here. At least the one I call Daisy. Something about her makes me think of spring and flowers. I guess that she is refreshing to look at, even inspiring. In her backless shirt, the gold of her hair fell softly on her copper skin. When she stood near the wall, I imagined in the blending of thse colors that her back was an ancient landscape painted by a prophet dreaming of what earth looked like when God first commanded light to the world. She smelled nice, tropical I think, or maybe I was confused and she smelled that way because I was wearing daiquiri all over myself. It could be the decor of the basement we are in,: fake palm trees and a grass skirt around the bar. There are papier-mache pineapples, fish, and birds hanging randomly from the ceiling, and the big balloon parrots drifting with the draft of drunks stumbling by. I try to drink some rum, straight from the fifth, but it is too hot. I spit it on the bar. I wash out my mouth with some beer, straight from the hose. I drink as long as I can and then spit out the rest. I think John said something, so I throw my cup at him, and now he is covered in beer and returns the favor. The floor is a swamp of strawberries and Bud Light; our goal now is to finish the keg, just the two of us.

At this time of night, in this drunken state, that bottles seem like an enemy to me and any glass near me that is not shattered poses a direct threat to me and my companion. I begin to smash them ridding myself of any threat they allege. The crash sounds good, little pieces of glass skating across the floor, resting in pools of alcohol, shimmering in the confusion of being high. My thoughts at this time are of immediacy, living in this moment and far from reality. Nothing matters now; there are no consequences because my mind can't evaluate the risk before my body acts on an impulse. The bathroom is too far away so I piss in the trashcan housing the keg. This melts the ice. It is getting later and darker, I can barely see. Only the hose of the keg is distinguishable before me, and I think I sometimes see Daisy, but I know she is gone. John is spouting off, something about how the world is just like the ice cube that I pissed on and when it melts away the world is over because when you think about it the earth won't be around forever and in the sense of eternity the world is an ice cube. I suggest that maybe if I piss on him he would go away, but he doesn't like that idea so I drink some more from the hose.

the keg isn't empty. I had turned John off, he is still rambling: what if dogs could talk and do trees have souls and other subjects that only seem to matter when one is completely sloshed. I believe he would sargue that this state is the only time our

mind could handle such deep and jarring questions. I empty my bladder again, and slouching down agains the wall, the keg at my feet, I drink some more. My eyes are heavy, but the keg is not gone. I relax. John is gone. I think he went to the bathroom. Who cares. I need a woman, Daisy, beer, sleep. The keg's not gone. John is. Daisy is. I should sleep.

I wake up to the sounds of waves crashing the shore and the blaring sun on my face. I'm drinking a daiquiri again, and this time it is in a yard glass and there is a paper umbrella in it. It tastes too sweet like the bartender went short on the liquor. I'll find him there under the cabana. John is at the bar. He is sitting next to a monkey who is wearing a diaper. They are both eating bananas. When I reach the hut, John suggests some tequila and I agree. The bartender emerges and I am surprised that it is a female. I have never seen a live gorilla before, and this one is wearing coconut shells across her chest. She brings the shots and tells me that someone else, who has since left to become a bear trainer in a Russian circus, made my last drink. I believe that is a smart move I say, since he served weak daiquiris.

A family of penguins walk by. Judging from their accents they are probably from northern Maine. Vacationing one last time before the twins move away to college; A school back easy no doubt. They are wearing ivy-league T-shirts. John is now dancing with a new primate, an orangutan, and the island music seems to bring the best out of him. They do a lively samba then a snake wraps itself around two trees and John slyly limbos. A crowd of pelicans gather, and John sets the world record for lowest limbo. Marcos St. Jean of the Pacific Limbo Coalition awards John with a plaque, and then leaves on a cruise ship that had just docked down the beach. It seems like a rowdy group is exiting the ship as Marcos boards it. Two animals of every kind walk in a slow procession from the cruise liner. They begin to mingle near the lifeguard stands as the porters carry their luggage from the boat. Elephants talk to giraffes while the gazelles venture into the ocean where the tropical fish have swum to the shore to greet the new animals to their temporary home. Marlin are the most congenial, but they lack common sense. Tuna are the wisest fish in the sea. Fish are smart because they are always in schools: what a tired, old joke. Dolphins dance near the shore and disperse lei's to the arrivals. A quartet of parrots sing Jimmy Buffet songs while I notice a woman approaching me along the shore.

I stand up, do another shot, and walk away from the bar. The sun, though beginning to set, still attacks me with golden rays. It torments my shoulders and pricks at my nose. I turn around to find the grass roof has caught fire and the money with the diaper on has been arrested. He is in handcuffs and the police are taking him away. John laughs and shares a s'more he made with a couple newlywed pine martens: Lou and Grace. The gorilla has left and took a couple bottles of scotch with her. She will need them when she gets home; she has had trouble sleeping lately. I approach the woman nearing me. It is Daisy. She smells like her name. She is painted from neck to toe in wild colors with small strokes. Someone stole Van Gogh's brush. It was Monet. He paints Daisy's instead of water lillies now. I take her hand and we walk along the strand. A imarachi band follows us and sings Italian love songs. Dean Martin is the leader. Daisy nearly cries during "That's Amore." We dance slowly. The moon has replaced the sun. I unravel a paper from my pocket and declare my love to Daisy; "Sweet Daisy, my love, hold my hand as I sing your praise, touch me as I tell you how much I love you."

We now enter a tropical garden. Low palm trees bend to form arches, their leaves explode at the top like shiny green fireworks. Flowers bloom wide and grand. Daisy is at home here, among the plants. A squirrel breaks off a rose and brings it to her. I pay him and we are alone again. "You are my one love. You are young and fresh and I am consumed by your presence. I can't live without you." Everything is perfect in the garden. It is an oasis of my love for her. A paradise within a paradise. We feel safe here, yet something pulls us away. We begin to walk again, and on the beach there is a campfire. Following Frankie Avalon, people are dancing around it and chanting. Everyone has a half-gallon of rum, and at the end of the chant everyone drinks and passes their bottle to the person next to them. The chant begins again:

"The world is an ice cube starting to melt. Dance near the fire, see how it felt." I fear those people are senseless, but we enjoy the rum and the dance has made us excited. We run into the ocean laughing and splashing, but she stops frozen, paralyzed. Her smile fades and she looks down. I follow her eyes and see the paint of her body washing away, and with it goes her soul. She kisses my cheek before she is nothing more than a gold and purple cloud in the sea. A wave breaks and she is scattered about the water like pieces of liquid glass shimmering in the moonlight. She is gone. My love has gone. I return to the beach and sit down resting my back on another lifeguard stand. Birds fly in pairs over the surf squawking sweet stories to each other, testaments of their love. The waves crash. Lonely, I start to cry. Daisy has left, yet her scent is still in me. The waves crash, the sun shows its face in the eastern sky.

Michael C. Winters



Untitled Gabe Sauvie

Competition

Alone on the mound,
the bright spotlight shining down-
like a theatre student with too much stage make-up
the sweat makes the black mascara run,
dark tears streaming down rose-colored cheeks

Onto the stage, the diamond shaped playground
where emotions race and battles are fought with swords,
the competition: good vs. evil

Monotonous arm windmill
swings at each batter
as a pendulum
sways to and fro
flings the ball past the batter
Crack! Like a whip
into the glove

Teeth grit, fists clench,
fingers grip, force all muscles
to concentrate
towards the goal

This is not just a game, but an imitation of reality
on or off-stage
a performance, for public eyes to see
to clap, cheer, criticize
the piercing spotlight

Take it. All yours

Carrie Shay



Untitled Gabe Sauvie

The Curse of a Hug

I never use my windshield wipers in public,
Inside a sponge collects excess moisture.
Where are you?
Am I alone?

It's going to rain again.
Make sure you don't squeeze me.
Sadness be gone!
Linger no more around me.
.
. only inside me.

Eric Buschlen

Untitled

(after e.e cummings)

push, smile
inside the lovetuftiness
of your pink,
sighs, yes, more,
any where for it
is fine
tablets sleek
of warmth,
slickness and smell how
and mmmmmmmmm
and more, sighs, yes,
sighs, more, yes,
swishes by like
eyelashes on peaches,
ripe as mmmm, yes, more, sighs,
rams down, out
the pink universe your
which wails more, yes, sighs,
yes, sighs, more,
parting sun, stars, sky
and ooooooooo
and closed eyes
and dark
smile

Matthew Hill

Vodka-driven screw

As life fell into
dim repetition,
I lost what was
commonly known as sense,
drowning myself in
liquor and the vaginal grip
of a woman whose
name and number
were written on the walls
of men's restrooms everywhere.

She was soft,
a rock and a tack,
in a vodka-driven screw.
Nine drops of OJ,
not so easy on
the 90 proof.
Wake up morning after,
alcohol dead.

A soft demise.
Yes, she was.
Five minutes of
hell, hell, hell,
and a little sinful heaven.
As dogs in
Back alley's
broken glass and
trash littered ground.

And in the end,
not so easy on the virus.
An eternal REM freeze,
but a small loot loss,
for one
twelfth hour live
as door nail.

Dion Mindykowski

gehennetry

the longing rises up inside me,
like words conjured into existence—
brought into being by a master wordsmith,
one who knows the phrase that my
ears burn to hear, the phrase that'll make me
sigh in agreement, capitulate to the invitation,
give in to it.

I can barely think before i've
shut the eyes of conscience and
uncovered my nakedness—
it's as if i'd spoken the words to myself,
seduced one arm with the other hand,
given myself that secretly desired gift,
but this can't be.

as the tongue flickers, i can hear it
from both sides—
it comes from within, yet the voice
is foreign, a romance language of
assuaged nuances and subtle caresses,
verbal nibblings on the earlobes of my soul:
come to me now.

and then i feel my lips mouth the words,
groping nothingness to pull them out—
i speak them and am echoed,
the pit of my spirit bellows to the
mimicry of darkness,
a chorale symphony of circular repeatings,
first one then two.

this beauty, it shuts out
my wonderings and tramples on,
like a staggering, dying, animal—
i must help it, mustn's i?
or do i hear another wordsmith
in the surrounding trees:
come now to me.

Matthew Hill