

# **THE Legacy**

**2012**

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Edition**

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## Alumni Submissions:

### Eyes

I look at eyes.  
They tell so much.  
Mostly they reveal  
What is never said aloud.  
They whisper secrets.  
They reveal love and hate;  
Sorrow and gladness.  
Often they wear a veil,  
Shutting out.  
Then, I wonder

Eyes can fathom  
The depths of another.  
They can embrace—  
Without touching.  
They can love—  
Without saying a word.

I wonder,  
Do you look at eyes?  
If I let you look at mine,  
Then you would know.

-Flo Quattlebaum

### Tarnished Victory

The pain is gentle now.  
It does not penetrate my  
heart as it once did.  
But memory knits my brow,  
and causes me to know  
The scar will not be hid.

Nor would I wish it so.  
It is a part of all that  
I've become.  
And through I suffered  
long and silently,  
Most of me has won.

-Flo Quattlebaum

Alumni Photography Submission:

Up to Bat

By: Wylajeane McGee



In Flight



## Short Story Submission:

### That Steady Gaze

By: Brant Nelson

He had the thought: *If I could just scream, if I could just move this energy from my stomach and into my throat; then, I could move with such lightening speed that time would slow, and noise would no longer be lost in the voluminous chasm of Maybe.* The night was muggy on the veranda as Skylar Anne rubbed her hands in his methodically, warming nothing, his sweaty palms and her steady regret siphoning nothing but an increased awareness of the situation. Not even *their* situation, he knew from the tone of her voice; the way she had said those three final words

*—I have decided.*

When noise finally returned, the cicadas were lively and heavy like a plague. He had thought that the movement of her clasped hands in his now clenched fists was to the beat of their steady drone, but then there was an offbeat and he knew this either wasn't the case, or she too realized that she had been doing it and aloofly put an end to the rhythm. He wanted to assume the latter because he always wanted to see the worst in others, and especially the worst in her. He felt like he would be sick. Pretty green, like Garret had said the night at the dorm when they had stayed up late smoking cigarette after cigarette trying to learn how to make rings with the smoke. Seph wasn't a smoker, or at least he had not gotten to the point where he called himself one, not gotten to the point where he needed it, or even wanted it because each time he still felt sleepy afterwards. Edy was teaching them; he was a smoker. Seph stood, like he had suddenly remembered something important that he had forgotten in his room, and once standing up, and deciding to stop thinking about puking and deciding that he would indeed puke, there was no turning back. His plan was to walk slowly, casually, but half way there he broke into a full out

sprint, ending it all in vain with one foot half in the carpeted lobby, half in the cemented bathroom. Yellowish, chopped carrot porridge pushed through his stomach and on to the cuff of his jacket, his shoes, half on the carpet, half on the cement. He used hot water and paper towels to clean the puke as best he could; not bearing the thought of Alice, the janitor of the dormitory, having ever known it existed. It wasn't the beers; he could hold his alcohol, he thought. It was Edy he knew, to whom it was a joke, and to whom he blamed. Scrubbing frantically, paper pulp interspersed in the tiny fibers of the grey lobby carpet, Garret with his torn jeans and black hoodie sidestepped him, and Seph could hear without a stutter a tinkling against the porcelain urinal, "Yeah, I'm feeling a pretty green, too" he had said.

*you knew this was a possibility, nothing is safe you know and we*

I never wanted it I hadn't asked for it

*I'm a slut to you I am*

but I did but I hadn't asked for it it was unsolicited

*I have made my decision I have made my decision*

Skylar Anne had been squatting opposite of Seph who was on the swing, but now she had risen to sit on the wicker chair, and to Seph she felt far away, like the extra five feet had set her apart from whatever bond they had once shared, and he grew cold. He remembered the first night. He hadn't been able to stop shaking. He felt cold then too. His arms growing tired in deadlock above her, inches in between their two bodies, she had been biting her bottom lip and he was repeatedly whispering *Are you sure? Are you sure?* It had probably been an hour, it had felt, since they had stopped kissing, had stopped embracing, and began to look at each other in an eternal gaze of vulnerability. Then, in one short fluid movement, she raised, turning her back to him indicating Seph to hook her bra which she hadn't removed, and she began to pull her shorts

up over her panties, which she hadn't removed either. She never cried, not that night, which struck him as odd since repeatedly, for the silliest arguments, she had in the past. She had just sat there, head in hands, elbows on knees, saying nothing. It had been Seph who finally broke the silence: something about this being a good story, how that one day maybe they would look back, see how in their innocence they had fought the temptation, not in a funny sort of way, but in a loving sort of way. Driving her back to her house she had remained silent, and he couldn't tell what she was feeling, and the only thing, the only recurring thought that kept him awake that night, as late as it was, was he hadn't expected them, her panties, to have been that color.

His father's words: *A woman in every situation can determine what is good and what is a poor judgment and it is by this that they are able to base their every move; their every decision. Now a man, his curse is not knowing in the exact moment what is right and what is wrong. The philosophers are men because men spend their time in moral contemplation. A woman, they are all knowing. When they sin, they know they sin, and their intention is to sin. This is why I believe that if there is a God, he must be a woman.*

She hadn't been crying now either, but Seph, maybe as a part of feeling the coldness, that separation, had felt the need to console Skylar Anne. From what he did not for sure know. He was a man, and it was a man's obligation to, he thought. He had spent much of his time in thought the last couple of weeks, thinking about blue eyes and brown hair and freckles and tiny fingers. When he was a child, probably no more than ten years of age, his father had taken him to the old hunting site of his grandfather's. Sitting high in the tower among the trees, being able to see the smoke from the cabin, the boy could think only thoughts of grandeur and of fright. The wind would waver the old tower of his grandfather's construction and his father's weak restorations, and the boy would think of the horrific fall. If he did fall he knew that in the midst

of despair he would have to make choices. To fall on his head would mean death. If he landed on his feet, his ankles would break and his mother would be upset because he would no longer be able to ride his bike to school in the mornings and she would be late at the hospital. The best option, he had decided, would be to land on his back and elbows, even though this would knock the air out of him. Then there was the options of where would be best to fall. Behind the tower were the discarded wooden beams from his father's last repairs. Death. And on both sides of the tower were rocks that would result in injury, but directly in front was a shallow patch of mud and leaves. It would be a tricky fall, but in his head nothing was larger than the shaky tower, and the distance between Sky and ground was massive. He would have time to make the proper adjustments, the boy had thought. The tower was tall, and the only thing that was taller than the boy at that moment was his father who next to him sat. Then, "Shh." There was a deer in the distance, in the front of the tower. His father passed the gun to his son and pointed. The boy had shot the gun before, but he wasn't a hunter because he hadn't killed anything yet. Because the boy had shot the gun before, he knew of the backfire, and each time it scared him, now more than ever. His father helped position the gun against his shoulder, right in the pocket, and his father placed the boy's tiny finger on the trigger. The boy looked at his smiling father; no connection had yet existed between the two of them before. His father was a hunter; his father had killed before, and now it was the boy's turn. It was the boy's turn to enter into the realm of manhood, to join his father, and to be his son. In that moment the boy had stopped thinking of the life in the distance, or even about the fall. He only thought of his father, and of honor. Potential energy surged from his feet, building pressure in his arms; with the only outlet for escape being his tiny finger, loosely wrapped around the trigger. As the boy looked at the deer through the scope, he saw that it wasn't a buck; then, the boy fired.

His father's words: *A man you could say never reaches an age of sexual maturity, while a woman is born into it; is made a part of it by her very nature. I'm not talking about boys being boys or girls and their monthly cycles, although that is a part of it. To be a man and to be a woman are two separate planes. One getting to live in close commune with the land, being herself a physical creator, a mother; the other forever striving to be a part of that reality, but always on the edge in futile agony. Her decisions; his thoughts.*

Seph walked the distance from the swing to the wicker chair, which was much shorter than he anticipated. He had no words for her; he had no way of knowing what she was feeling. Seph started to squat, but decided against it, choosing to stand and that little bit of shrinking and rising made him, once again, lightheaded and the corners of his eyes went black. He did not faint, but he did enter into a new space: a border world between reality and non-reality. Then slowly, his uneager hand reached out, making contact with Skylar Anne's shoulder

*—Don't touch me.*

She did turn her head, however. And so they looked at each other, which they had yet to do, but in their nakedness there was still a barrier. He had penetrated it maybe before, but maybe not, and now looking into her eyes he knew how separated they were. They were strangers unable to understand one another. In that steady gaze they had created a bridge, but neither would dare cross it. Seph turned and walked towards the truck and as he backed out of the driveway, he saw Skylar Anne begin to cry.

## Three wishes as time grows short

By: Greg Rohloff

At breakfast the phone rang, and Cecil looked at the Caller ID screen. The call was from his parent's house, and he dreaded what this was about, answering softly.

“We moved your dad to hospice last night. He wasn't eating and when the attendant asked him if he wanted anything to drink – he hadn't been drinking all day – he didn't say anything. He was just blank.”

“It's been five days since dialysis ended; we knew this was coming quickly.”

“Can you come up today? They said he would last a day or two.”

“I've got a performance review meeting at work this afternoon at three, the big bosses are in from California, and this meeting will last a couple of hours or more. Since it will be so late tonight, I'm coming up in the morning. Jason will come, he's out of classes tomorrow for Thanksgiving.”

And, with that, the conversation with his stepmother that Cecil had dreaded was over; the dread building all through the spring and summer as his visits with his father grew more frequent, and his father's health declined, marked by how he broke down in tears and a quivering voice when the visits would end.

The work meeting would be the same as each quarterly review – the division head would explain that goals were not met companywide, necessitating additional cuts in costs; positions would be unfilled, travel reduced, salary reviews delayed. Cecil wanted to be there as a defensive

tactic. Take notes to show interest, agree with plans, and most of all, defend himself should another department point fingers at his.

When Jason came from his room, slinging a backpack over his shoulder, Cecil met him at the foyer. “Grandpa's moved from his room at the care center to hospice. We are going to see him tomorrow, so when you get home after class, pack for an overnight trip.”

“Is Mom going?”

Cecil shook his head. “She'll be doing Thanksgiving cooking to take to the Fosses; Rick's tours of Afghanistan are done – he's getting out.”

Jason looked puzzled.

“We'll see Grandpa on Tuesday, come home Wednesday, and go back for the funeral sometime next week.” He sounded so matter-of-fact that he felt as uncomfortable as Jason looked.

The afternoon meeting went as he had expected – business buzz words “challenging environment,” “new paradigms,” “working smarter” – all meaning budget cuts. And when he got home that evening he put the meeting out of his mind and thought about the morning trip – four hours from Dallas to Tulsa – and feeling a touch of relief when Belinda met him in the kitchen. Cecil was grateful that she was up, for the combination of chemotherapy and an arthritic condition in her back often left her too tired most afternoons to do anything but nap until shortly before supper.

“If you're cooking, can I help?”

“Can you grill the pork chops – just salt and pepper and garlic and barbecue sauce if you want that.”

Cecil opened the chops, spreading them on a tray and seasoning them before taking them to the grill. Belinda did not look tired to him but she walked stiffly and instead of joining him by the grill, she returned to the bedside table where she kept pain meds when her back knotted up.

The pork chops would be done in twenty minutes, the meal another twenty minutes after that, and Jason would be given the task of unloading the dishwasher and reloading it. Cecil would sit with Belinda at the dinner table while Jason cleared and cleaned, and when the tasks were finished, Belinda would announce her usual trip to bed to read, and Cecil would inquire about Jason's classes in a way that was more distant than Cecil preferred, but too prying to Jason's sensibilities. As the conversation ended without any reminders of the morning trip, Cecil reassured himself reflexively that Jason would stay on top of his coursework, figure out a major, and strike off on his own in the not-too-distant future. Jason went to his room to study, and Cecil, sorting through the recent magazine arrivals, joined Belinda.

She asked her usual questions – lights out, doors locked, alarm set, which Cecil had done – and her final question, a refill of a water glass to take the anti-inflammatory before she would go to sleep. Cecil had waited for that question before doing anything other than setting Golf Digest on his pillow, and he retraced his steps to the kitchen where he added ice before topping off the glass.

Back in the bedroom, he set the glass on a coaster on the night stand as Belinda counted the pills she would take as her pre-sleep routine. Before Cecil could finish brushing his teeth, she would be lulling off, and when he got into bed, she wearily whispered her desire for a massage

around her shoulder blades so she could get more comfortable. He set aside the magazine and rolled toward Belinda, kissing her softly on the back of the neck, stirring memories of how such a kiss once had fed their passion for each other. Now, though, she meekly thanked him as his hands pressed into her back, and professed again her love for him, and he wondered if she would ever be free enough of the pain to respond the way she once had done. Instead, she pressed her face against the pillow into sleep, and Cecil listened to her soft breaths as he slid his arm across her waist and inched closer to her, grateful that she was alive, hopeful that their time together would be long.

Belinda barely stirred when the alarm clock first buzzed, and then switched to the radio. He lay next to her momentarily, waiting for a weather forecast, and after hearing that skies were clear with only a slight chance for rain, he slid out from under the top sheet, pulling it up over her shoulder, and he dressed by what daylight slipped through the blinds. Jason had already dressed and eaten by the time Cecil had taken his packed bag out of the closet and set it by the front door.

“I’m going to have toast with coffee. Can you put the bags in the car?” Jason nodded without saying a word. Within minutes they were settled into the car, Jason, adjusting the ear buds to his iPod, and Cecil checking his sunglasses for smudges. They would ride for two hours before Jason turned off the music player and shifted in his seat as if he were going to sleep. Just outside McAlester Jason sat up. “You think Grandpa is going to still be alive when we get there?”

Cecil nodded as he looked at his son. “He always said that once the dialysis couldn't clear the poisons out of his blood that he wanted to stop. The doctor told him he'd go about a week

before the pain would get bad, and after that, he'd have three or four days at most. Grandma and I got Dad's affairs in order when we were up just before the semester started.”

“You didn't seem too scared when she called.”

“No, I've been over that for a long time. He's 87 years old. He's had a heart attack, a stroke, colon cancer twice, and when he was diagnosed with diabetes nine years ago, we all just figured that each year was a year that was a gift. The last time he was really happy was when we all got together for his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. He said he was surprised that he had lived longer than his dad. I'm hoping I do as well.”

As the highway sign showed that Tulsa was just over 50 miles away, Jason tugged on the ear buds and adjusted the volume of the music player, and Cecil wondered if he would live another 32 years to better his father's longevity; how 32 years ago, when his father was his age and he was just a little older than Jason now, was still so fresh in his mind, how his dad later had invited him to bring Jason and Belinda for fishing trips on lakes around Tulsa, Jason taking the boat's buddy seat next to Grandpa, even when he was a teen-ager.

His mind kept coming back to the same question: Would I be so lucky?

Just outside of Tulsa Cecil stopped at a rest area, calling his stepmother as Jason checked the vending machine. “Claire,” Cecil said, amping up his most optimistic tone. “We're just outside of town. We'll go straight to the hospice if that's where you'll be.”

“Oh yeah, I'm here, alright; been here since six-thirty this morning. I dabbed a bit of toast into a glass of iced tea, and pushed it against his lips, but he wouldn't eat anything. His lips are so

dry. I've been sticking a sponge into his drinking water and wiping his mouth, but he doesn't say anything, just looks around the room for the few minutes that his eyes are open.”

“Are they giving him pain medication?”

“He's got a pump but I've got to squeeze it now. The nurse said to do that whenever he jerks his arm. Not that he really knows what he's going to get. He talked a little bit yesterday morning when your sister and niece were here, but you could hardly understand him.”

“Sounds like you got your hands full. We'll be no more than 30 minutes.”

Jason had purchased a sweetened tea drink and a chocolate bar and rejoined Cecil. “Did you hear me talking to Grandma?”

“Yeah, is Grandpa doing OK?”

“Pain meds keep him from hurting. He's pretty much sleeping from what Claire had said. Joy and Denise were there yesterday, but they are on their way back to Kansas City.”

Traffic was light once Cecil had turned off the turnpike and drove through the south Tulsa neighborhoods that had once been so familiar to him. And when they arrived at the hospice, he saw a parking space near the main entry, where he would stand in front of a video camera as he addressed the lobby staff, who would buzz him in and direct him to his father's room. His pace quickened as he neared the door, a gift of the anxiety he felt, an anxiety that would melt away once inside the room.

Inside, Claire hugged Jason first and then Cecil, and repeated what she had already told them over the phone. Cecil edged away from her toward the bed where his father lay on his side, his knees drawn up, his expression faded and worn.

“He can hear you, but he can't say nothing.” Claire pushed a side chair toward Cecil.

“Just as well sit, the doctor won't be back until late this afternoon.”

Cecil was uncertain what the doctor would be monitoring in a hospice, and, even if he knew, he was uncertain how well Claire could interpret what she had been told.

“Doctor said he'd probably live through tonight and tomorrow night, but after Thanksgiving it would be iffy. They're just trying to keep him comfortable.”

Cecil sat at his father's bed side. He reached to pull the sheet up across his arm, and, once covered, he patted his shoulder and rubbed across the bicep, a memory flashing over how strong his father looked that first Fourth of July that Cecil could remember, and his father carried a charcoal cooker in one hand, and an ice chest filled with hamburgers ready for the grill, the trimmings and drinks with the other. The skin was soft, but stretched away from what muscle was left in the arm.

After about twenty minutes, Clair pointed to a clock that was reading noon, and asked if they had eaten anything before they had gotten into town.

“I thought we ought to get here first.”

Claire dug into her purse for the spare house key, and handed it to Cecil. “You want to go to the house and eat something?”

“How about we all go for some lunch, and if you want to go home, Jason can take you, and I can stay here this afternoon.”

She let out a deep breath. “We can do that.”

His father twisted under the sheet and for a moment, opened his eyes.

Claire pressed the pump once more. “He's only waking up when he's hurting. That should take care of him till you get back. Maybe longer.”

They ate at a Subway not far from the hospice, and, once back there, Claire gave Jason the keys and she sat in the passenger's side. “They may have something for him to eat again at three o'clock. Otherwise, they'll have the water and the sponge to keep his lips from sticking together when they get so dry.”

Cecil realized that he had never been around a dying person for this long. “We'll be fine; I'll call if anything happens and I can come get you.”

He watched them drive away, and when he went back into the room, he wetted the sponge and pressed it to his father's lips, pushing a corner between the lips and squeezing out a few drops. For the rest of the afternoon he watched his father sleep, and when the duty nurse brought in a broth for the afternoon meal, she offered Cecil a soft drink. “He probably won't eat this since he didn't eat anything this morning, but that's OK; he's not hurting. You can get some ice chips from the dispenser by the desk down the hall. Sometimes the sponge can feel coarse against a patient's lips. Just rub the ice across his lips to keep them moist.”

Cecil thanked her for the Coke and filled the bucket with crushed ice. He sat in the chair next to the bed and tried to get comfortable as his father lay twisted at the waist. Whenever his father's lips looked dry, Cecil spooned out ice, taking the largest chunk to rub across his lips, and slipping a single sliver into his mouth those moments when his lips parted. Shortly before 9 o'clock the nurse came by to tell him that visiting hours would be ending and asked if he would be spending the night.

When Cecil looked puzzled – he had not considered that possibility – the nurse said that his father's heart rate and breathing were still strong enough to live through the night. Cecil said he would sleep at his parent's house. He patted his father's hand once more and spoke out loud, uncertain that his father could hear: “We'll be back in the morning.” Through it all, Cecil felt numb seeing his father's withered arms and hollowed cheeks. The drive to the house, no more than five minutes, did not erase that feeling, nor did wishing his stepmom and Jason good night. Not even turning out the guest room light and pulling the sheet up over his shoulders as he rolled onto his side seeking sleep brought back a sense of reality. He could accept that his father was dying, but he wondered why, looking at the shadows of the oak tree against his window shade, he did not have a stronger sense of remorse over his father, and why he could not sleep easily without Belinda.

The next morning, he awoke at dawn, and as he lay in bed wondering if he should get up, he heard his stepmom in the kitchen. Cecil dressed and joined her for coffee.

“You going home this morning?”

Cecil nodded. “Belinda will need some help getting the dinner prepared. She'll be cooking all afternoon.”

“I wish I could go to. Won't be much of a Thanksgiving here.”

Cecil ignored how his stepmom's tone meant to elicit regret. “You going to your sister's?”

She nodded. “We'll probably eat around two so I can get back over to hospice again.”

“We'll call tomorrow evening; it'll be a short dinner..”

They finished their coffee as Jason came to the table. Before anyone could say anything, he pulled a bowl from the cabinet and poured cereal.

Cecil turned to his stepmother. “We planned to go over with you this morning and stay with Dad again and then go from there. Do you want Jason to drive you over?”

“No, no, I'll need to drive home anyway tonight. I won't stay past dark, but that will be OK. He's not going to be much different. If you want to eat something before you go, you can stay here and fix some sandwiches or eat cereal, and then meet me there.”

Cecil was packed and ready to go to the hospice and Jason would need no more than five minutes to finish eating. But he nodded his agreement, realizing she needed her time too, whether she was going to grieve or build on the guilt she served up with the coffee, that did not matter. As she left, Jason asked when they were going. “We'll give Grandma sometime this morning with Grandpa before we go. If you want to, get the ladder out of the garage and check the gutters around the porch. The oak leaves haven't fallen yet, but whatever you can clean out now is something we won't have to do later.”

Jason took his bag to the car and set the ladder up on the sidewalk from the front porch to the drive, where he cleared sticks and a handful of leaves from the gutter along the spots that usually clogged up through the winter and ran water over the edge in early spring. Cecil locked the doors, stuck a garage door opener into his pocket, and put his bag in the car where he waited for Jason. On the drive over, he explained that they would stay until lunch and head home.

The morning passed in the same relative silence as the previous afternoon, and when the time came to leave, Jason waited by the door as Cecil gave Claire the spare garage opener, and leaned over his father's bed. “Dad, we're going to go now. I love you and I'll never forget you.”

On the drive home, Jason asked if Cecil had thought anymore about the plans for letting him use this car when he transferred to UT-San Antonio. “We've talked about it. We're just not sure what kind of car we would get.”

And as that conversation with Belinda replayed in his head, it rekindled a memory of how excited his father became when Cecil drove up in a new car, and how he would never again ride around the neighborhood as his father gushed how much he liked the car. They arrived home late in the afternoon, and when they entered the house, their yellow Labrador retriever raised his head from his place in the middle of the foyer. The dog was nearly 12 years old, and instead of frequent walks, his routine was now split between sleeping in the back yard and sleeping wherever a family member was in the house.

“Belinda! –” Before he could say any more, she hollered out that she was in the kitchen, and she came to greet them. “Fritz has been there all day waiting for you. Can you get him out before he messes?”

Cecil patted Fritz, and as he raised his head, Cecil motioned toward the door. “Come on, old boy.” The dog struggled to stand, his feet sliding on the tiled floor, and Cecil knelt and placed an arm under Fritz's belly to steady the dog as he gained his footing. The dog slowly walked to the sliding door to the patio, and once outside, he lumbered around until he found his spot.

“How's your dad and Claire?”

“He's about as bad as you'd expect and still be alive. She's pretty harried right now. I told her we'd call tomorrow. So, what's with the roaster?”

“The Fosses called. Rick didn't want a big group for his first Thanksgiving back home, so I got a turkey. It'll be just us three. We can cook it now, but you'll have to let everything cool and put it in the oven before you come to bed, or we can get up early and cook it then.”

“Early.”

Cecil took his bag to the bedroom, dumping the dirty clothes in the hamper and setting the rest on the closet shelf awaiting whatever day next week they would return to Tulsa. He went out on the patio where Fritz stood, tail lazily back and forth, waiting for the door to open.

“Come on old boy, you need to walk around some more out here.”

Fritz started to back up to turn around, but his left hip hurt too much, and when he squeezed against the door to turn around, he did not have enough room and, again, his right side legs folded up, dropping him to the patio.

“Fritz! Fritz!” The old dog turned his head toward Cecil, and struggled to his feet, his tail wagging slowly. Cecil knelt beside him, rubbing his front shoulders and then his back. Fritz looked into Cecil's eyes, and as Cecil stroked the dog's back, he thought about the day fast approaching when Fritz's weakened body would no longer be able to rise from such slips, and, just as he had prepared himself for the impending death of his father, he thought of what the last day might be for this dog that had been his walking companion, sleeping at the foot of his bed, curling up at his feet in the evening, greeting him at the door. The veterinarian who had cared for Fritz would be called, and in the exam room, Cecil would lift Fritz onto the steel table, where he would scratch his chin and hold him steady as the vet prepared the pentobarbital injection, talking softly to Fritz and pulling the dog's head close to his chest as the needle pierced his coat, his hand feeling that last breath slipping away as his body sunk to the table.

The thought of how life was changing so rapidly seized Cecil; how the sallow, limp figure tangled in sheets and a hospital gown was not the father he would miss. His thoughts went to the one who had fished with his son and grandson, who lavished praise over the ride of a new car, who had gone to ball games and celebrations. That brought a tear to Cecil's eyes now, and he leaned down to pet not this ravaged old dog whose brown eyes were turning cloudy, but the rambling pup that would chase a ball across the back yard and flip it around, jumping and lapping at Cecil's hands and brushing against him whenever they were together. When that last day would be he did not know, nor did he care to think about it, just as he would not dwell on what would happen with his father after Thanksgiving, and what future he would have with Belinda. He could only hope for the best.

## Poetry Submissions Part I:

Poems by Bethany Jones

### Waterfalls

A rushing line of liquid life.  
Surrounded by imposing images,  
Forest green.  
Grey giants grace its gallows.  
Bringing rapture to the ear  
That hears it's roaring  
Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass

### Night of Fun

People piled together in rooms.  
They drink and scream for fun,  
Fighting chaos, and in the corner looms  
Death, hovering like the sun.  
Russian roulette, where's the gun.  
Gather together, let's play.  
Death shines like a ray.

### Midnight Freeze

Blue cheeks in the midst  
Of a blizzard.  
Tear drops falling down  
Frozen skin.  
Arms reaching, but  
Never finding.  
Clock strikes and  
Everything freezes.

## Poems by Jessica Johnson

### Stay

It's like sunlight on ashes,  
Whispers blown away,  
My heart lost to oceans,  
Anything so you'll stay.  
The fight, it was my fault.  
The wrong, it was mine.  
I love you forever,  
My heart knows no time.  
Without you I'm nothing,  
With you I'm all.  
Together we're everywhere,  
Winter, summer, spring and fall.  
We're perfect together,  
Your love knows no fault.  
I need this for always –  
Anything so you'll stay.

### Strength

I'm inhaling moonlight, and coughing up ash  
Tired of the hatred that fills all my past  
The truths that they told me the lies that I found  
In my blood I keep slipping I can't find the ground

I want to let go, while you beg to hold on  
You don't want to see my soul's already gone  
I'm used and I'm broken, both tattered and torn,  
The blood you think fills me is drenched in their scorn,

Through darkness unending my last prayers have failed,  
The path of my sins is what you have trailed.  
I smile as you tell me you love me once more,  
Do you know that it ends when you close the door?

So I shed my tears as I turn out the light,  
All too sick of the struggle and so tired of the fight,  
I look down as the blood flows over the knife,

And look for the strength to hold onto my life.

I made you a promise I must try to keep,  
For the love that I have runs tremendously deep.

Together we're changing who I am at the core,  
And I know that your love's what I'm staying here for,  
You fill me with light, even as I'm covered in black,  
And you lent me the courage that I used to lack.

So even though I must cut to move on,  
It's because of you tomorrow will dawn.  
I put down the razor and cover the mar,  
The way that I see it, it's just one more scar.

I love you, and for that reason I keep  
Plundering through this darkness so deep.  
You are the light that keeps shining through;  
A light I know brings me to a life that's brand new.

So for tomorrow I must thank you, I know  
That bathed in your love I'll continue to grow,  
And when in the morning I once again wake,  
You'll know that my love is the deepest of lakes.

## Truth

I want to write something beautiful like... love. Not so much the word, letters are rarely beautiful, but like the thought, the feeling as it brushes against your soul. I wish to write something elusive like mist, something as impossible as unicorns or fairies dancing in the starlight, circled by rings of toadstools. And I need whatever emotions or grasp or beauty it brings to be lasting and eternal, an untarnished truth for every generation.

## What We Have Lost

I have given all that I can give;  
You have taken all there is to take.  
And yet, I cannot let go of hope  
I won't live my life overwhelmed by this fear  
And while knowing all there is of love,

I have swallowed up my share of hate.

This world is drowning in its hate.  
Every one of us afraid to give;  
Each of us taught we are wrong to love.  
Who taught us all that this world is ours to take?  
Why were we taught to cling to our fear?  
When did we forget the path to hope?

Free are those who bathe themselves in hope,  
And wash clean the wicked stains of hate.  
Wearing armor that guards them from fear--  
Knowing all found in this world is theirs to give.  
Power found by refusing to take,  
and filling an empty heart with love.

Gossamer threads between those who love --  
A tensile strength bonds those who know hope.  
Belittling those who live to take;  
A tragedy growing on those steeped in hate.  
Weakest are those who don't ever give,  
Drowning in memories of childhood fear.

When did we learn to soak up that fear?  
Blind to pledges that filled us with love?  
And dreams I had of worlds taught to give  
And the time when we filled another with hope?  
Before we taught our children to hate,  
When did we grow into those who take?

Still wanting more than both hands can take,  
Acting as if we can buy off fear.  
There are those who won't settle for hate,  
Who are young enough or wise enough to love,  
Who see this world in rose-colored hope,  
And are pure enough to want to give.

I have grown to hate the things I've learned to take.  
I want the chance to give a life without fear  
To the child I love and who makes me see hope.

Student Photography Submissions:

The 2011 World Finals Ranch Rodeo

By: Shannon Gray





## Poetry Submissions Part II:

### Poems by Jovan Munoz

#### Unnamed

I  
Find that  
Closing your eyes  
Convokes the cries within  
The body and soul's urgent  
Need for relief. The troubles from  
Our lives snatch great joy away, sometimes  
Taking our fortitude and courage to carry on.  
The creative dreams that escape our minds onto pillow,  
Dance our problems into thin air, skittering every small worry  
To the distant jar Mr. Sandman keeps rested at his side.  
Sleep, the only remedy and true elixir before the rise of day.  
What more could God lend us? The natural part of life gives peace  
Without flaw, rendering us to be accepting human beings during the night as we  
Lay in complete bliss with smiles and calm expressions, with the moon and the stars  
Glittering ever softly from above. Enchantments are here for us after the sun waves its goodbye.

#### The Winged Creature

On rooftops and cathedrals elevated high,  
A winged creature guards the sphere if ever a cry.  
Not invisible, this being hides from human sight  
By casing his wings about him in luminous light,  
And with the world still aging, his love for them will never die.  
Why should the world doubt such a thing as the days go by,  
Some refusing that he exists and that nothing can fly?  
Well here's some news, he's leaving in the dead of night.  
Claim your faith or be empty.  
With rage and sorrow the earth had to deny  
That their protector was nowhere nigh.  
With gathering anticipation they hoped not to be smite,  
For if they accepted their sins there wouldn't be a fight.

And so at this the winged creature would return with stern sigh,  
"Claim your faith or be empty."

### The Component

Pure heart burns from his deep and clear blue eyes,  
How soft they melt in dream, disturbed by noise.  
Of shouts plus jeers from field, men hush their boys,  
While sand kicks tall, that ride, that steed, he flies.  
Beyond a fence a man is main surprise;  
Clean shirt with two and five, his thoughts with ploys.  
So young, with nerve, great vice and so much cloy,  
His quest to prove a love, his dad's demise.  
The sun sets gold, the sky laments, burns red,  
He tips his hat with sweat upon his brow,  
Looks up, hears peace, the day's been worn and bled.  
With might in hand, legs rise not knowing how,  
This real and true component, focused head,  
Takes in the reins and relegates his shroud.

Poems by Taylor Digby

Trust

I never thought I'd lose a love as true.  
Your eyes met mine one dark and fateful night.  
That's when I knew I'd fall in love with you.  
It felt as if my world was warm and bright.

I did not think that you would fall for me  
And when you did I knew it would not last.  
You are my hope because with you, I see  
How great the world can be. Things changed too fast.

The thought of you is killing me. Your eyes  
are asking for the truth. I ran away  
because I can't keep up with all the lies.  
The fact is all I want to do is stay.

I can't forget the night I lost your trust  
Although without you, hope will turn to dust.

911

I look upon the cold September sky  
And try to fight the painful urge to cry  
The ash and dust begin to darken hope.  
Without you standing tall, I cannot cope.

The sounds of screaming fill the streets with fear  
And all I do is pray that you are near.  
My mind begins to race. My heart will sink  
If you are lost in just a single blink.

I hear that fateful crash and you are gone  
I can't be here. I can't just wait for dawn.  
In order to stay strong for those I love,  
I need to find a way to rise above

In just one day I lost much more than you.  
I lost the faith I had in all I knew.

## Underestimated

Sometimes it feels as if I'm lost at sea  
The water is fighting against me.

Sometimes it feels as if I'm a good book  
The things I say need a second look.

Sometimes it feels as if I'm a monkey  
People think I am a little funky.

Sometimes it feels as if I'm a bear  
Cross my path only if you dare.

Sometimes it feels as if I'm a lost game  
Everyone believes I am the one to blame.

Sometimes it feels as if I'm a great snack  
No matter what you do, you'll never get me back.

Sometimes it feels as if I'm an old band  
No one, nowadays, can truly understand.

Sometimes it feels as if I'm a lost show  
There is no one out there who will ever know.

Poem by Febe S. Fernandez

El día que todo Monterrey perdió en el casino

¡Qué tristeza me dio aquel fatal día  
Al enterarme que mi gente había sido nuevamente atacada!  
Junto a muchos lloré al presenciar la maldad que día a día crecía  
Y una vez más la tranquilidad de los regiomontanos fue violada.

Aquellos hombres de aspecto frío no estuvieron más de algunos segundos,  
Pero fue suficiente para arrebatarles a muchos de algún futuro  
Esparcieron gasolina dejando muertos y a familiares dolores muy profundos.  
El casino Royal se llenó de llamas y humo que rápidamente pintó el cielo oscuro.

Uno sólo puede imaginar la multitud de gente corriendo hacia las falsas salidas de emergencia  
Y la angustia que hubo al descubrir que estas puertas no fueron hechas para salir.  
Era solamente otro ejemplo de la negligencia  
Y que por causa de eso, cincuenta y tres personas dejaron de vivir.

Esta tragedia marcó por siempre a los regiomontanos.  
Es tiempo de que el gobierno pare al crimen organizado;  
Pues nunca pensamos que de esta manera empezarían a atacar a nuestros hermanos.  
Juntos tenemos que exigir seguridad al ciudadano.

Translation:

The Day that all of Monterrey Lost at the Casino

How much sadness it gave me that fatal day  
As I found out that my people had been attacked again!  
Along with many I cried as I witnessed the evil that with day by day grew  
And one more time the peace of the people from Monterrey was violated.

Those men with a cold aspect were not present for more than seconds,  
Yet it was enough to snatch many of a future  
They spread gasoline leaving death and families with deep grief.  
The Royal casino became full of flames and smoke that quickly painted the sky dark.

One can only imagine the crowd of people running toward the fake emergency exits  
And the anguish that they had as they discovered that these doors were not built to exit.  
This was solely another example of the negligence  
And because of this, fifty-three people stopped living.

This tragedy forever marked the people of Monterrey.  
It's time for the government to stop the organized crime;  
Since we never thought that in this manner they would start to attack our brothers.  
Together we must demand security for the citizens.

Poem by Seth Fry

Curse of the Puppet

Hooked on strings forever forced to swing,  
Doomed a puppet controlled by hubris pride.  
Spoon fed lies to build your being  
With no form 'cause art has died.

Doomed a puppet controlled by hubris pride,  
On strings that move you're forced to follow  
With no form 'cause art has died  
In these walls that keep you hollow.

On strings that move you're forced to follow  
The lies you're fed... I'm thinking you'll be  
In these walls that keep you hollow.  
But maybe, one day, just maybe you'll see

The lies you're fed... I'm thinking you'll be  
Lookin' for places for your soul to sell.  
But maybe, one day, just maybe you'll see  
You ain't built nothin' but an empty shell.

Lookin' for places for your soul to sell,  
You're spoon fed lies to build your being;  
You ain't built nothin' but an empty shell  
Hooked on strings forever forced to swing.

## Poems by Austin Bagwell

### Valinor

I have sung the song of Roland  
And ventured where I may;  
I have walked the halls of heroes  
While ravens had their say.

I have sparked up conversation  
With kings from days of yore;  
Sailed on with bow struck west  
To live in Valinor.

To say that I'm a dreamer  
Would not be oft amiss;  
My heart beats more in rhythm  
To love than than loneliness.

### First Impressions

I have this dream,  
a fantasy, if you will.  
She walks in like a cloud,  
you can sense her presence,  
feel her around you.  
It smells like rain...  
spring rain and woman.  
She takes a seat at the bar.  
I sip my gin, and wait.  
Dark eyes roam the silence  
as she sizes us up,  
daring us to move,  
but we can't,  
and she knows it.  
She sips. We gulp.

Aphrodite, she said  
That's my name.

I'd been so far gone dreaming,  
her words hit me heels to the sky.

But you could call me Rose,  
if you'd rather.

My tongue chased my thoughts  
away from her eyes  
and roused up a voice to gasp  
hello.

### Untitled

All I want  
is to lose myself,  
to drown in the ink.  
If life could be still long enough,  
if I could find the right cliff,  
my words would flow forth  
like a war cry,  
like a kiss.

### Young Love

If these words were a gun,  
I would shoot you dead.  
If mere verbs could paint a picture in your head,  
I'd give you Guernica.

I'd show you how Jesus bled.

You think you're so clever,  
oh young darling damsel.  
My dear,  
Crawl your ass  
out  
of my bed.

### Monday Morning, 4 a.m.

and should I write every thought,  
I would become lost in the bright of your eyes.  
I don't want to be lost, I want to find my way back  
to this place time and time again, and  
sink once more into the silent depths.  
This is not where I know;  
not where I've been. My god,  
I can't even breathe, not until  
I see my eyes reflected in your own.  
If I've been here before, it was  
but a dream, and this now  
my waking thought, that  
I would spend my life in slumber  
to dream this dream again.

## Editor Submission:

### Something Old, Something New

By: Daniel S. Mountain

This place was a wreck when I first saw it. All that you could see was a dilapidated trash heap inside of a concrete shell. But I saw a little more, and decided to try my hand at showing you what I saw.

The building (and the land beneath it) were easy enough to buy. No one had taken care of this property in years, and no one wanted the burden of taking care of it now that it needed serious attention. A foreclosure auction was all it took for me to own this, my personal treasure.

Polishing that treasure up was harder, and far more expensive. I couldn't get a loan for the job. What sane businessman would back me? But I worked hard, saved up my own money where I could, and asked for help from friends and family when I couldn't stand alone.

And today, my vision is almost complete. Where there was once an old school, forgotten by its former owners, now stands the best cyber-arcade for a hundred miles. The hottest machines, the best laser tag arenas, the perfect Wi-Fi setup. Seriously, this place has everything. All that's really missing is you.

So please, won't you step inside?

Poem by Joshaua O'Brien

Gilded Death

A shuttle of scarlet passed between the warp of a tapestry woven with white noise,

sounding a sour note among the stillness of night sounds

that subtly induces a recollective form of synesthesia.

Lulled by the rhythm and regularity,

crooning to linger a while in that liminal space,

as though an aquatic borne berceuse blanketed the night,

as if mourning the painful process of rebirth,

their melancholy impregnates the desolation of the ripening night.

On their way to elsewhere, its streamlined mechanization cements them,

amalgamated with the tender timbre of dreams in grotesque eloquence.

In the shadow of eternity the intricate patterns of the weave come to light.

Gilded death stalks the night.