

# THE LEGACY



The Legacy is a creative arts journal which accepts submissions from current WTAMU undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, and faculty and staff members of the University community in the following categories:

Fiction, Drama, Creative Non-Fiction,  
Poetry, Art, and Photography.

## Fall 2010-Spring 2011 Submission Deadlines

October 20	Weird Stories and Dark tales
November 22	Fall Edition
February 7	My Bloody Valentine
March 18	Spring Edition

For submission guidelines or for more information,  
go to [wtamu.edu/thelegacy](http://wtamu.edu/thelegacy)

# THE LEGACY

WEIRD STORIES

&

DARK TALES

swims, edges of her sight softening but she's focused on the door and half-way there. Her foot slides in warm, thick blood and she falls, hands catching herself, blood splashing up onto her face. The taste of blood fills her mouth. Fingernails skitter across her shoulder, probing into her wounds.

“Leaving so soon?”

*Drip*

*Drip*

*Drip*

West Texas A&M University  
October 2010

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ping.”

It persists in the background, a sound she can just barely catch when everything else is still.

*Drip*

*Drip*

*Drip*

The migraine is back. The pain stems from a spot between her shoulder blades now, radiating up her spine, her neck and over her scalp. *It must have rained*, she thinks because the air in her room is cold and damp. She moves slowly in hopes that the pain in her body won't flare. Rolling, sitting up, almost there. Feet on the floor, bare toes just touching the cold surface. She points her toes, weight going on them and then screams when the pain declares its disapproval.

*The stench is stronger, the dripping slower. There's light filtering through dirty windows. She stretches her leg further gritting her teeth against the pain that tugs back against her scalp and along her spine. Finally her weight rests on the balls of her feet instead of the tips of her toes. The pain makes her stomach roll, her heart beat faster and turns her breathing to pants. There's an IV in the back of her hand and a piece of tubing in the vein at the crook of her elbow. It's uncapped.*

*Wake up.*

*Wake up.*

*Wake up!*

*Everything shifts, turns, twists and -snap-*

Warm, wetness dribbles down the back of her neck and down her spine, making her nightgown cling to her skin. Her head

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thick blanket, the dream already getting hazy. The migraine is there pounding behind her eyes in time with her pulse.

*Drip*

*Drip*

*Drip*

In rhythm with that damned, dripping faucet.

Sleep. She just needs sleep.

*Drip*

*Drip*

*Drip*

“It's going to rain.”

The words are a lazy mumble and she knows even as she says them that it's not true. The day is pristine; the sun is warm on her skin lulling her into a laziness that is akin to being numb. Fingertips skitter across her arm, making her shiver just a bit before she turns her head enough to see him lying next to her. The shiver is gone as she watches his fingertips trail up her shoulder to her neck.

“This is utopia. It doesn't rain in utopia.”

“It's a nice thought but I can hear the water dripping--” her words halt and her brow furrows with a memory she can't quite capture. “The faucet—I told you to call the plumber.”

“You're worried about the faucet right now?”

“Because I can hear the dripping.”

“Sweetheart, there's no faucet out here and there's no drip-

## What Is and What Never Should Be

By Kristi Allen

**D**<sup>*rip*</sup>

*Drip*

*Drip*

Pain hammers just behind her eyes in rhythm with the dripping faucet; her pulse trips along, making a triage of something that's not quite agony but far from comfortable. She places the tip of her tongue between her teeth to keep from grinding them. It takes her several seconds to work up the willpower to move with the intention of turning off the faucet. The movement intensifies the pain behind her eyes and makes her nauseous.

“So much for that idea.”

It's more thought than whisper, not quite getting past her lips.

*Drip*

*Drip*

*Drip*

She bites the tip of her tongue hard, convinced the faucet is louder than it was a few minutes ago. She makes a more concentrated effort to shut it off this time with a sudden burst of movement that makes her gasp.

*The air smells metallic, damp and rotting. Her whimpering echoes off the concrete walls as something pulls at the back of her skull, at her neck, and along her spine.*

She startles and she's back in her bedroom asleep under a

## Click

By Allison J. McCorkle

**L**ooking out the window, she thought to herself *he should be here by now*. It has been roughly three months since their last meeting and the newness of the relationship, coupled by the incredible sex was starting to get to her. The last time she saw him was at night, and he had been wearing one of those *Scream* Halloween masks. He had decided to show off his muscles by draping a sleeveless overcoat onto his wide shoulders. He had brought with him a single stemmed black rose for the long awaited occasion. She, always dressed to impress, had purchased a headband that was fashioned with the handle of an axe placed delicately onto one side of her head. Deciding that black went best with her eyes, she bought a “little black dress” and added her own flair by taking a cheese grater to the bodice, and dipping the ends in a mixture of red food coloring, water and starch. She finalized her outfit by rubbing charcoal onto her eyelids, and penciling black along the outline of her almond-shaped eyes.

Their love affair had started nine months ago over the Internet. She was lonely, and he was horny. Together they met on an online chat room named “Zombie Lovers.” Both of them agreed instantly that they should meet in person; the romance had been blossoming since their blood-shot eyes first looked at one another. He lived ten hours away and the only time they seemed to meet were on long weekends or holidays. This weekend would be their first Halloween together and she had prepared their evening as one he would never forget.

Car lights crept into the open window and reflected upon the glassy-eyed dolls she had placed on her bed. *Finally* she said to herself and as she stood up and walked downstairs to patiently await his push of her doorbell. *Dun Dunnnnnnn*. She opened the door to a strapping young man head to toe covered in blood. He blinked, and she melted; diving into his rather wet chest; tasting the bitter smell of human flesh. Inviting him inside, she closed

the door behind her. With a click, the outside world was locked away. She then turned towards the man of her dreams and asked, "What took you so long?" He responded by reaching into his vest and withdrawing a bouquet of wilted bloodstained daisies. She smiled and all was forgiven.

After placing the flowers in a vase, she gestured to the couch. He, following her towards the living room, slowly dribbled drops of blood in his left-behind path. "Did you miss me?" she asked as she threw couch pillows onto the floor. Instead of answering, he bent down towards her lips. Feeling excited, she responded by standing up to meet his mouth. Plump coolness met warm wet skin. She was beside herself with enjoyment, and wrapped her arms around his broad shoulders. Pulling him towards her they fell onto the couch. "Mmmrrrrmmm", is all he said as he collapsed on top of her.

*This is exactly what I had in mind*, she thought. While she tangled her fingers in his greasy hair, he clawed his way toward her stomach, ripping her clothes off and discarding them onto the carpet during his voyage of her body. He released his mouth from hers and began to lick his way towards her neck. Upon reaching her jugular he opened his jaws and crunched his coffee-stained teeth into her flesh. "Ahhhhuuuuuhhhh," she both moaned and screamed while he continued to slowly eat away what remained of her neck. Her blood dripped down his chin and onto her pale skin while she remained calm under his body. Minutes later he stood up and examined his feast. Her once affectionate body now lay contorted in a heap amongst the scarlet-stained cushions of her couch. Wiping her blood off of his face, he turned towards the door. Silently sauntering away from the scene, he locked her behind with a click.

oil is far more real than brimstone. Sounds of metal twisting and glass breaking drown out my existence. Her pale thin face, illuminated for an instant in my headlights, is my only reprieve.

Of course I'd been drinking. Not much, just some cheap vodka I'd swiped from my roommate's freezer. It's not like I was drinking alone. I was going out to get cigarettes for me and the girl I'd left on the couch. Just a few shots with her, and a few gulps for me to actually feel it. But the girl in the headlights was nothing like the random drunk girl. She was an angel—engulfed in serene fluorescent light that signified impending doom—her hair floated in strands around her closed eyes. An angel completely undeserving of the death I provided for her. The flashing red and blue lights finally came, and the vodka smelled stronger on my breath than I'd remembered. I saw the body bag in the grass, and my eyes blurred from tears and blood. The smells I have come to hate more than anything made bile rise in my throat, and then there was only blackness.

But this smell is something else—something so goddamn familiar, and yet, out of reach. The memories are a flood of good and bad—nostalgia and loathing rise and swirl uncontrollably.

My head is spinning, floating as I fall. My breathing has become a hollow choke—a simulated rising of the chest—inadequately feeding starving lungs. The human grime and dusty smell of use, has formed itself into a memory. At last I realize what the smell is from—I think about my father and I laugh. I want to tell my dad his body bag will smell just like a taxi from the bar. Truth is; he wouldn't give a shit. Besides, he'll know it for himself one day.

## A Taxi

By Trent Roberson

I sure as hell won't take any criticism from my father. Of course, I don't blame him for any of this either. I've always been my own man. Ever since the eighth grade when I became a man, or at least grown up enough to have a beer with my dad in the garage and talk about sex. Sex I wasn't even having yet. But I pretended like I was to impress him. He liked that his son wasn't some pussy—waiting around until marriage or some bullshit—and I liked my father paying attention to me. And it's not like I didn't want to have sex or drink beer—I did. For the record, I drink because I want to drink. I'm not one of those pathetic, pretentious alcoholics going to meetings and seeing a shrink; blaming my dear old dad for my problems. Drinking is just something to do. It makes the sex I am having now easier to get.

This thing smells familiar, but I can't quite place it. Not a foul odor, just the smell of use. It's a dusty smell—like the years of accumulated human grime of an old couch, or a bus seat. Not wholly unpleasant, but it draws a vague scent memory that I struggle to recall. It's better than the paper mill smell of my dad's work clothes, better than waking up in vomit, better than pine-tree shaped air-fresheners, better than burning rubber, smoke, gasoline, bile, blood.

The flashbacks come about so easily.

I used to get lost in daydreams of riding my bike down the old dirt road by my grandparent's house, high school football games, driving other boys into the dirt, making-out in the backseat of my first car. Those were careless times; when dread wasn't a constantly churning acid eating away at my insides. Now the daydreams are continuations of nightmares—twisted and contorted into that one singular moment. Reoccurring doesn't quite fit. Life is a dream now. Consciousness is wispy and elusive—ever plunging into the unending night of my own personal hell. The smell of grinding brakes and motor

## Corpse Grindin' Man

By Brant Nelson

Y ou ever been in love, Sammy?" Dick was just about the stupidest fuck Samson ever met; lazy too. Standing idly, sipping on bootleg whiskey, Dick left Samson to all the digging. He was 'bout as useless as teats on a boar pig. But if Dick even got a hint of creeping eyes, he just as soon swat a mosquito than hesitate in taking the poor slum out. It was scary as hell being around such an off his hinges moron, but after being locked up for nearly fifty years, Samson had to take any job he could get. He was an old man now, and grave robbing was an all new game for him.

Timmons had warned Samson about the outside: "*It's different now Pa. They got society in the west. You can't just ride into town with guns blazin' like some crazed desperado.*" Timmons was a young pup, serving a few years for armed robbery. Like Dick he wasn't bright, but unlike Dick, Samson was actually keen to Timmons. The boy saw the old man as some legendary outlaw. Samson doubted if Timmons even knew what got him locked up in the first place, but nevertheless, it was flattering. *Dick, he wouldn't trust in a shithouse with a muzzle.*

"You mind given me a hand here boy?" asked Samson standing torso deep in the dry West Texas dirt.

"Her name was Eleanor, Sammy. She had these milky white legs, boney thighs, mmmmmmm...and loooooong curly red hair. You'll never guess where I found her!"

Dick grinned maniacally and pulled a female corpse from the side opposite to Samson, and began waltzing with her along the yard. Limp in his arms, Eleanor did not complain as Dick swayed with her between tombstones and roses—laughing ghoulishly.

*Je-sus Christ, he's off his rocker,* thought Samson and finding it hard to speak pleaded, "Listen Dick, we ain't got time for your nonsense. We got a job to do. We agreed now, Dick. A few graves and then we'll head off to another town. Now, please.

Help me. The sun's nearly risin'."

"Say, I think she's a real lady-of-the-evenin'," said Dick, with the same execrable grin he had upon the announcement of his new love, and began undoing his slacks, pulling out his namesake.

"Dick! God, show some respect!" screamed Samson. "Christ, she's just a child!"

"Oh hell, Sammy! She probably ain't any younger than you old man. She's been takin' a dirt nap since 1862!"

"Come now, Dick. We nee—"

"No!" Dick cut him off with fierce finality. Like a child protecting a favorite toy from another child, Dick crept away with the corpse in his arms. Then stooping behind a tomb a few yards away from Samson, began worshipping with jubilation his new possession.

Unsure on how to approach him, Samson apprehensively climbed out of the shallow grave and slowly made his way towards Dick. Throughout the night the cruel dustbowl raged on, but now at ground level Samson once again felt the unforgiving sting upon his face; the dirt getting into every crevice in his teeth.

Peering over the tomb he gasped as he saw Dick, pants to his knees, vigorously grinding on top the rotting corpse. The wind carried their putrid smell, nearly causing Samson to keel over.

"Hell, Dick! What in the devil are you doing!" screamed Samson as he haphazardly tried to pull Dick off of the girl.

"I'm giving her life, Sammy! I'm giving...I'm giving her life!"

Samson gave a swift kick to Dick's temple only to fall on the hard earth doing so. From Samson's new position on the ground he could see the cold eyes of Dick, staring unflinchingly at his unholy mate.

"Eleanor! Eleanor! Oh, how I love Eleanor!" screamed Dick, in a voice that hardly seemed his own.

After this licentious crescendo Dick rolled over sobbing, "I'm so sorry...I'm so sorry, Samson...but, we've unleashed her."

## Private Hell

By Jo Ann Ross

The State Mental Hospital was a jumble of low, scarred buildings that locals fervently avoided and ignored. In this locked ward lived chronic women patients, three nice words for hopeless, cast-off, and forgotten.

The bored psych aides gave them a Halloween party, bringing old clothing and jewelry for costumes. An aide painted the faces of the women, who mumbled, twitched, drooled, or moaned, each held captive by unpronounceable drugs. The aides had special permission to wear street clothes instead of white uniforms. In the restless throng, it was difficult to tell the aides from the patients.

Some patients moved jerkily to the music. Vacant-eyed Sharon was the wildest dancer. She called everyone "Beatrice" and talked like a baby. Grandmotherly Clara was herself tonight. The aides dared not let her nap before the party because she sometimes woke up as "Mrs. Einstein", who screamed obscenities and hurt people. Faye was short and very muscular. She lived here because the State Penitentiary couldn't control her violent outbursts. She had killed a man at sixteen and tore out the prison's isolation cell plumbing with her bare hands at nineteen. Shambling, and diabetic, Sarah spoke genteelly and did nails for anyone who could sit still enough. She had lived here for forty years; the early electroshocks had left her vague and confused. Catatonic Debra sometimes had seizures on one side of her body. Anyone sitting on the other side wouldn't see the convulsions.

Punch and cookies had been neatly laid out on a table, but red juice and crumbs now covered the floor and the patients. A blood-curdling howl revealed two patients wrestling, spitting curses and blood. Other patients joined in the fight, screaming and kicking. An aide triggered a loud alarm that brought white-coated men, carrying heavy leather restraints.

Finally, it was over. The party ended as it began, in the sickeningly sweet smell of urine, the dismal green walls, the faded clothing, and the insanity that lived inside them.

## Public Face

The hospital was an old and familiar landmark to the people of this quiet town. Many of their female friends and family members resided in a wing of the hospital when they could no longer care for themselves.

The friendly and dedicated nursing staff surprised the residents with a Halloween party. They brought clothing and jewelry for creating costumes, and painted gay masks in bright colors on the women's faces. The patients were excited and could hardly sit still until they could see the artwork for themselves. The staff wore their street clothes, so that everyone would feel like a part of the group fun.

Lively music brought many of the residents to their feet, and they danced with abandon. Sharon, who loved to dance, was very outgoing and constantly chatted with the others, although she could not always remember their names. Clara had not napped during the day because she was so excited about the party. Besides, she sometimes didn't feel quite like herself upon awaking. Faye, who had transferred from another facility, was known as a "real live wire." She was surprisingly strong and liked to show off a bit for the nursing staff. Although a diabetic, Sarah was always on hand to help the other women, especially with grooming. She was a long-time resident of the hospital. Debra was the quiet one, preferring to watch and listen. This was due to her bouts of epilepsy, but the other women always took her seizures in stride and acted like nothing had happened.

The refreshments were plentiful, and the residents enjoyed them. Sadly, a dispute broke out between two of the women and, before the nurses could intervene, it had spoiled the mood of the evening. The residents, who had begun arguing amongst themselves, became somewhat agitated. Other aides came to assist the ladies back to their bedrooms.

Of course, order was restored quickly, and the evening ended as it had begun. The residents settled back into their comfortable routine, assured by the peace and quiet around them.

Winning Selection

## Hunting Trip

By Michael Boyles

**T**ake the rifle. Put the stock into your shoulder. Steady. Aim for the heart. Breathe deeply, and squeeze..." He must have gone over this a thousand times at home in his father's makeshift outdoor shooting range.

*"It's time to step up now. Breathe deeply, squeeze the tr..."*

He tries to focus, tries to remember everything his father taught him, but he can feel his heart pounding inside his chest trying to escape, breaking his concentration. The child is eleven years old and this is his first "big game" hunting trip. His father taught him how he learned to shoot in the army, all he has to do is squeeze the trigger, but he isn't sure if he can bring himself to kill.

*"Aim for the heart. What if I miss? Aim for the heart. Dad's watching you. What if I can't do it? You've practiced too much, you won't miss. Breathe deeply. But what if I can't?"*

He looks fearfully to his father just behind him and to the side. His eyes say, *"but she is so beautiful, do I have to kill her?"* to which his father's cold expression, anticipating this disappointment in his son, replies, *"It's just an animal."*

The boy looks back down the long barrel of his rifle. So much power in such a small movement of the finger, a slight of hand, a magician's trick making life disappear, he wonders why such a simple movement is such a hard thing to do. He can feel the shame encircling him like a fog creeping around him, like the tenth plague on Egypt, like smoke from a steel factory, wrapping him up, penetrating his nostrils and choking him. It's too much. The boy whites out for a moment *"Stay conscious, stay conscious..."* He feels his stomach churning, fighting off the shame from his father. Gravity begins to pull his gun down. The boy is no longer in control of his body; he is a marionette doll being tugged in two directions by family shame and an innocence fighting for survival. His father makes a slight movement toward the boy, the shame becomes unbearable and sup-

presses the boy's will completely.

*"Focus on the target. Aim for the heart. You can do this. Breathe deeply, and squeeze..."*

Seeing that the boy is back in aim, the father goes back to his neutral position. The shame begins to ease up so that the boy can breathe.

*"Breathe deeply, and squeeze the trigger."*

The boy gets his shot off, bull's-eye, right in the heart just like his father had taught him. His target goes down immediately; those around panic and run in all directions. One stands over the victim not knowing what to do.

The father puts his hand on the boy's shoulder, telling him the one thing the boy had always wanted to hear his whole life, "Son, I'm proud of you."

This doesn't soothe the boy. He doesn't feel comfort or pride just emptiness, a hollowed out hole being slowly eroded by the wind.

"Now you're a man" his father says.

The boy does not respond. What could he say? His eyes are still focused on the target. *"A magician's trick."*

In the distance there is the sound of sirens coming closer, a helicopter, people screaming, his father tugging at his arm shouting at him, "We have to go now!" but he can't respond, can't move his legs, can't move his eyes. He is completely transfixed. His father picks him up and carries him off the rooftop and down the flight of stairs of the abandoned building on the eastside of town. He puts the boy in the car and takes him home, puts him in bed, but the eyes of the child never move once. They are still looking at the face of his mark bleeding on the ground without any expression at all. The boy just stares at her, confused that a black woman's blood would be the exact same color as his.

left behind when you three are gone, it just doesn't work for me to go first." He placed the duck tape back over the talking man's mouth. "It also doesn't work for me to have you swearing. If I remember right your God doesn't like swearing."

He walked back towards the previous man to continue his business, but then turned. "You see, this is the only way to know... There is only one... You three are here because you are all men of God: a Jew, Christian, and Muslim.

"You see, I hated my father. He hurt me often and one night I hurt him back. I was eight and I stabbed a knife through his heart. I stared into his eyes as he died and I could see everything. In that moment when he was between worlds I could see where he went. He went to Hell. Now, I really don't care much for where I end up after this life, but I sure don't want to end up where he is. That's why I need you three. All of you say your religion is the only way to heaven, and I have to be sure. I have to watch for which one of you get to heaven so that I make sure I don't choose wrong and get stuck with my father forever."

The standing man walked back to the other man and slit his throat the same as the first.

"Not him either."

He straddled the last man. "I was saving you for last because I think it's you. You're the Christian." He slid the knife into the man's chest and watched his eyes as he bled out.

After it was over he stumbled out onto the roof overlooking the city. It couldn't be. Death looked the same on everyone. He stared at the traffic below. How could it be... unless... A grin emerged across his face – there is no heaven –and he took a step.

## No Way to Heaven

By Chris Hudson

God may not play dice but the devil always rolls sixes. It is an odd experience to hear a man cry, and yet in a room of four people two of them had cried all night. They had cried muffled cries, as men often do when their mouths are covered by tape. When the dawn broke and the first light came in through the cracks in the doorway, the men were able to take stock of their surroundings. There were four of them in a circle facing each other. Each was bound in a sitting position to a chair with his mouth covered by tape.

Two of them continued to cry; one struggled against his bonds; the fourth stood up. The crying stopped. This was salvation: one of them had managed to get free. Each man beckoned the standing man to come and loose him. The standing man went immediately to the closest captive. He sat down straddling the other man and reached a steady hand up to caress the other man's cheek. With his free hand he pulled a knife up and across the sitting man's throat. The man with the knife watched the other man's eyes as the blood ran. He watched the eyes until the man was dead.

Standing he mumbled to himself, "Not him." He walked over to the man on his right and straddled him in the same manner as he had the first man. He reached up and touched this man's cheek.

"Stop," shouted a voice across the room.

The man with the knife stopped.

"Why are you doing this to us?"

"To you?" replied the man with the knife. "I'm not doing anything to you. I have every intention in doing this with you, but you really weren't supposed to talk during this."

"You bastard. If you are doing this with us then how about you go next?"

The man with the knife stood and walked towards the talking man. "Don't worry my friend, I have no intention of being

## In Red

By Mattie McAlavy

As with all things depraved, the house began humbly. A simple, airy place surrounded by quiet, fresh fields. The air is stagnant. The odor overwhelming.

When the Master fell ill, they moved him here -- the first day of Autumn. Through the dead of winter he regained himself, but never truly recovered. Castor and Pollux, foreign servants, are his most devoted. They've brought him his Life for well over two hundred years.

Footfalls in the house. Why do they keep coming here?

As with all things demented, the metamorphosis began gradually. His initial requests to add onto the house were dismissed as residual mental whimsy from the treatments, but they never stopped. More rooms. A courtyard in the middle. *More rooms. Put a door in that wall. Rooms. More levels. Stairs. Cover the windows. Add windows. Cover the windows. Even the courtyard. Cover it all.*

Soon the house was swallowed whole by the weed that had overtaken the land.

Light, clicky footfalls. She may still get out.

The villagers had since grown curious, wary, until the following harvest, when they began to fall ill.

*Bring them here. I have suffered what they are suffering. It would be unkindly of me to not personally see that they are... healed.*

They are still here. Not healed. Driven mad. They are the reason the innermost room is filled with despair so stagnant it chokes.

She's stopped.

The Monster was mad. We knew it all along, but none of us expected him to start bathing in blood and screams and wine grown from the courtyard.

We began to fall ill when the village was barren. We hadn't seen the Monster in ages, but Castor and Pollux, middle aged

when I began my tenure as a child, were ageless, the same, no longer caring to take their victims in the dead of dark, to silence pleas for mercy on the way into the bowels to the beast. We learned to silence ourselves, weeping with dry eyes when they came.

She can hear them coming now – but she can still get out.

Word spread in the outside world. The house gets bigger every day. Explorers never return - too many doors, not enough exits, too many rooms, no way out - *There's no way you can survive half an hour in there! oh yeah? watch me!* - no exodus.

She should have stayed in the study, gone back out whichever way led her in. I can feel her scrambling steps that catch in the deep rugs. The twins are the same – calm and resolutely corralling her deeper and deeper, around corner after corner until there is nowhere left to turn.

I wish they would stop coming - reporters, foolish kids, men with special devices, young couples looking for “romance” in the old *haunted house*.

The Monster lives. Your life is his Life, once you come inside.

She is cornered. She is doomed.

They are upon her.

The house parts for them, a loathsome Red Sea, walls cushioning her yells, floors absorbing the noise of her thrashing feet, digesting her wails and shrieks, absorbing them and spitting out another room somewhere.

Invisible demonic agents, dragging her into the innermost room.

I can feel her twitching eyes roving spasmodically, trying, trying to see the devils severing her tendons with eerily steady hands and faces devoid of humanity. She gasps, squeals, clutches at nothing but air dampened by her last breaths. Her life flows in red rivers down her

His captivating instructor taught him to embrace who he was meant to be. At the session's conclusion, he began to pay, knowing the confirmation of his new experience undoubtedly had overruled the outrageous fee. Surprise and joy flooded over him when Calleis confirmed there was no monetary fee for the service, for he now was one of them.

One week ago, he thought she had done him a favor, but he knew what they said when things seem too good to be true. He hadn't prepared for the intensity his new gift would bring, and it was not long before he realized he knew not how to shut it off.

He went back to her office only to find the remaining sickly sweet smell, along with two people looking as desperate as he. The man nearby he estimated about thirty, but accuracy was difficult, for the marring and distortion of what were once cheekbones was so severe. He glanced at a young woman leaving the room in a panic. He quickly opened the door for her since her hands were both heavily covered in bandages. Her mouth silently formed quick thanks.

By two days later, his psychic abilities had become so advanced, he literally could not distinguish one world from the next. He was at the tram station frantically running from everyone and no one when the police picked him up.

They didn't even laugh. He told them the truth, and they did not even laugh. The absence of ridicule instead was filled with a worse return: pity. He balked at how little they really knew. Schizophrenia they said; a danger to himself. The binding straightjacket he wore mocked him right along with their pity.

He remembered the point when it all registered: the beauty, the hollowed eyes, the massive scarring. The pieces all fit the moment he looked down and saw every one of his eyelashes strewn about his white uniform. It was also the moment he realized she was mocking him too.

## A New Trade

By Courtney Lynn Thompson

It occurred to him that curiosity probably would kill his cat because he would not be there to feed fat Napoleon anymore. He relived those moments once again, since after all, he did have all the time in the world.

The sign instantly caught his attention, and he found himself being led by something more powerful than his own will. He didn't even shutter when he saw the emptiness within the receptionist's eyes; nor did he gawk at the gruesome mutilated scarring that had once been her lips. He could tell she was once beautiful, but now she seemed out of place in this warm, sickly sweet room. He quickly signed in and was directed down the corridor into a clean, bright room with lilac walls. He had expected something completely different. This place should be dark, with distant whispers and shadows playing at his feet. However, it was as he turned the corner that true shock registered. Inside the room sat the most exquisite looking human being; a beauty unaffordable to words.

Her name was Calleis, and when she greeted him, he became instantly mesmerized at the sheer power her voice possessed. She must have noticed his nervousness because she attempted to ease it with a compliment, but coming from the face of perfection, it almost seemed untrue. Throughout his life, he was often noticed for his eyelashes of dark fringing length and fullness; a trait he generously accepted from Spanish grandparents. He blushed at her remark and began to explain what had driven him to this place.

The voices were growing louder, more demanding, and the colored orbs destroyed any hope for some concentration. It was not their existence that plagued his mind, but the reason behind it. This woman was destined to be his answer.

The astonishing truths she revealed to him offered a view of a world he had never seen. She showed him the potential of power within and how to access beings he never knew existed.

trembling, pocked flesh, down the rusted metal gurney, onto the tiles matted with filth and into the pit where the Monster's own bones have wallowed, stationary, shivering, for centuries.

Her breath catches on the tangible odor of terror – hers, countless others' - and death in exchange for some semblance of Life.

Soon, she is just another presence in these walls, her bones thrown into the decrepit courtyard, that ancient tangle of withered, black grapevines that eternally suck their marrow.

The pit gurgles.

The Master lives.

## Los Muertos y Los Muriendos

By Dominick Miller

**O**n a cold, ugly afternoon in autumn the writer walked toward his home. Behind him, following closely, but with no real haste, was a man. The man took small, choppy steps, and with every third step the tip of his shoe would scrape the concrete, producing a harsh, grainy sound not unlike the scraping of bones.

The procession of writer and man went along for some time, unnoticed, perhaps, by many others, but was the singular focus of the writer, who had begun to take notice of his new shadow. Their separation remained steady no matter what pace of walking, be it casual or hastened, the writer adopted. Soon the writer was certain he was being followed and to prove it he employed the labyrinthine alleys of a portion of Barcelona the Catalans call *El Gòtic*. Naturally, after many blocks of walking, no matter what crazy turn he chose down whatever craggy, dimly lit alley, the man followed with dogged obedience.

After many hours of directionless walking the writer began to unwind. The air grew gradually colder and many of the church steeples began to howl in the windy dusk. He grew tired and with each new dark corner he turned he felt infinite loneliness plunge at his heart and strike it cold. The rhythm of the shoe echoed between the tight fitting buildings. The scratching, scratching of the shoe, scratching with inevitable regularity, brought the writer closer and closer to something monstrous. The reverberations grew too deafening for any sane man to stand and no matter how much the writer played with the change in his pocket, or thumbed the spines of his books, or heard the tap tapping of the small wooden crucifix on his chest, nothing could completely drown out the sound of the scraping foot against the harsh asphalt of the city.

He turned a corner again and nearly ran over a small boy with a sunken face and black hair. The writer looked to the boy and asked him if he heard the same noises. But the boy, because

of some youthful inattentiveness, or if only from his own fear, just shook his head and turned away, totally unaware, by the writers reckoning, of the man who followed or the endless scraping of the shoe.

When at last the few strings of sanity and joy snapped in his heart, and loneliness and fear came crashing in, the writer ran down the alley in blind desperation. He saw ahead of him, at the end of the alley that lead to the streets, light streaming in from the setting sun. He ran toward it with the wind nipping his ears and the sounds of the shoe calling to him like a far away voice at the end of a tunnel.

When he finally reached the end of the alley and turned around to see what was behind him, he was greeted with only a darkening, empty void. He breathed with new ease, but as he turned toward the street, standing directly in front of him was the man. The two's noses nearly touched and he could feel the man's cold, raspy breath on his chin. The man had an expressionless face, a face with all the features of a normal face, but features so plain they were easily, instantly forgettable. He touched his lips to the writer's ear, and with a smile curling on the corners of his mouth, he whispered "Die." then stepped back into the path of a coming truck, and was run over.

You would never know a man was just killed in front of them, for it is with such peaceable indifference the people on the street continued about their business. Horrified that he might be the only one who saw such a grizzly act, the writer stuck out his hand to catch the attention of a woman walking by him, but when he did his legs gave out, and he fell, lifeless, on the sidewalk at her feet.