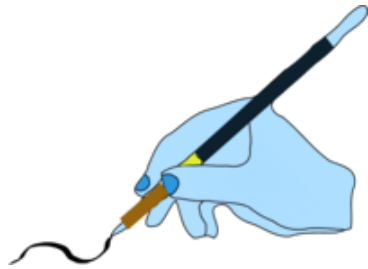


THE Legacy

The Legacy seeks submissions for its four annual issues.

Submission Deadlines

<i>Weird Stories & Dark Tales</i>	3rd Friday in October
<i>Beloved or Bloody Valentines</i>	1st Friday in February
Fall Edition online	2nd Friday in November
Spring Edition print	3rd Friday in March



Submission Guidelines

The Legacy accepts submissions from current WTAMU undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, faculty and staff members of the University community.

All written submissions should be sent as a .doc; .docx or .rtf attachment to **legacy@wtamu.edu** with the following information given in the body of the email:

- Your full name.
- Your name as you wish it published.
- Your major and class standing (Freshman, Sophomore, Graduate student, etc.) if a student, or year of graduation if Alumni.
- Your department if faculty or staff.
- Contact Information: email and phone number
- Additionally, identify the genre of work you are submitting in the subject line.



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“Substitution,” Chris guessed.

“No. She’s not on the bench. She’s just ... gone.”

Biting her lower lip, Sarah looked into the bleachers. There was no sign of her mother. Maybe they left together, Sarah thought, because they’d done that before and almost forgotten her, but that didn’t make sense because the game wasn’t over.

Sarah looked at the white, waving spider silks. She murmured, “Where do they come from and what are they doing here.”

“Ow,” Chris exclaimed.

Sarah whipped her head around and stared at Chris. He slapped his hand on his arm, pulled his hand away, and stared at a small, red bump on his skin.

“Spider,” Sarah guessed. “You’re bitten.”

Chris raised his head. He looked at Sarah then shrunk, gasping, to a brown speck.

The Chris spider floated near Sarah’s eyes. A string like white silk appeared from its belly. The silk caught the wind, and the Chris spider floated away.

“I guess that explains what they’re doing here,” Sarah said to herself; “But I still don’t know where they come from.”

A piece of silk drifted close to Sarah. Deftly, she stepped out of its path.

paused then stopped completely.

As the forgotten soccer ball rolled past his feet, the referee looked to the sky. He cried out and slapped the back of his neck.

“What happened,” exclaimed a player.

The referee lifted his hand away from his neck and stared at his palm. “Spider,” he muttered.

That answers question one, thought Sarah; some spiders preferred flying to webs.

Chris, a boy from Sarah’s class who was tossing a football nearby, spotted Sarah and waved.

“Did you see the parachute spiders,” Chris shouted.

Sarah hurried to Chris. She skidded to a stop, nearly tripped, recovered, and nodded.

“Ref got bit,” Sarah gasped. “Parachute spiders?”

“Uh-huh. That’s what my Dad said,” Chris declared.

He looked past Sarah to the field. Chris stared then exclaimed, “Where is the ref?”

Sarah finished waving to another friend and turned back to Chris. “What?”

“The ref’s gone. See?”

Sarah looked and didn’t spot the referee. What she saw was soccer players milling around and looking worried, and people in the bleachers rising to their feet.

A soccer player pointed her finger at one player then another. Her brow furrowed as her lips moved.

“Is she counting,” wondered Sarah.

“Yeah,” Chris replied, “And she’s not happy. See why? Not enough players on the field.”

Sarah looked hard. Calmly, she whispered, “My sister’s gone.”

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CONFESSIONS OF A SERIAL KILLER

By Tiaralee Bargas

I must confess
I have been watching you for some time
Months to be precise
Trying to create your beautiful demise
Having my inner-most darkest thoughts collect and ebb from the
darkest parts of my mind
Oh I hope you become mine
You are my lamb and I but the wolf that ever follows you my dear
How I would love to carve your lithe figure into a new design
Have you the newest actor on my stage to do your part
I want to glorify you as my new art
Pretty soon you shall be on my stage and have an ending worth
painting
I am but an artist you see
Your body is my canvas
Gluttony has become my downfall tonight
For I no longer have the will to hold back
Seeing you walk down the dark alley
Starts my unsated hunger
As I walk behind you
The gift of your musical screams will fill the night chilled air with
symphony
Only agony could compare
Ideas of what to do to you are endless
You could say you were at the wrong place at the wrong time
You know I'm behind you as I whistle Mr. Sandman in endless cy-
cles
Seeing small puddles shimmer with your image gives me an excited
hunt
Let me be blunt you were not my first hunt
Know you are but many who have crossed my path for an unfor-
tunate horror
And an orchestra of screams

SHADOW PLAY

By Maryanne M. Wells

A white silk strand drifted over the soccer field. A few peo-
ple glanced up. No one looked for long. The game was on, hot
chocolate flowed readily at the concession stand, and the tight
group of fans in the bleachers was happy just to be. By all appear-
ances it was a typical Friday night.

Three more silk strings floated past the bleachers.

Sarah tugged at her mother's sleeve. Pointing at the silks,
Sarah asked, "What are they?"

Her mother gave the sky a cursory glance. "I don't know.
Spiders," she muttered, focusing on the field. "What is that coach
thinking? You sister should be playing forward."

Sarah knew better than to ask her mother more questions.
When her mother wondered out loud about the decisions of coach-
es, it meant she wouldn't hear what Sarah said. Instead, Sarah asked
herself the things she wanted to know: why would spiders be float-
ing around and not in webs, where did they come from, and what
were they doing here.

After kicking the backs of her heels against the bleacher
seat for a minute, Sarah announced, "I'm bored."

"Hmmm," her mother replied.

"I'm bored," Sarah repeated, louder.

Her mother pointed to a knot of children playing near the
west goal.

Sarah skipped down the bleacher stairs. A white strand
drifted near her face; Sarah dodged it with a quick twist. She
glanced up and froze.

"Wow," Sarah whispered.

Dozens of silk strands floated over the soccer field and
bleachers. Soccer fans gawked and pointed. Action on the field

WORTH THE FALL?

By Kelly Turk

You flew before, I do assume, on wings
Of twigs and leaves. The winds were mild and skies
Were clear. The heady feeling of no strings
Expanding till expelled in gentle sighs.

Beneath you scuttling to and fro alert
And loving eyes did watch as you took flight.
Their voice encourage while they edge and skirt
Along the sidelines gladly playing knight.

But testing's over. Safety's been turned off.
The ground's much further than it was before.
A churning dread is hinting not to scoff
As frail and wobbling wings appear unsure.

The future frightens, yet rewards are great
For those who roam beyond believed in fate.

Spewing from their lips like the forbidden taste of wine in youth
Yet I am the puppet master that controls them and the beauty of
their demise
I hope you come to realize my lovely butterfly
It is you I've come for as my prize tonight
Your stage I have in the underground of my house
Will be a theater of your final act of which I now set in motion as
of this night
You think killers are all but the same
But granted like everyone else we are all ordinary people who bear
masks
We hide the carnivorous wolf within
Prey upon you on still chilled nights
Stalk you and get know your ways of habit before we pounce
Yet not all can tame in fits of hunger
Become ravenous of the hunt and bid hello to the crimson reward
that awaits at knives edge
After we are done we take the trophy we see as proper to remind
us this glorious spree
Of dark temptation spilling on the concrete or forest stage
Do not be alarmed for my ways
To you this is wrong
But to me this is what I merely do every day as I think of ways to
fulfill lustful appetite
You see there have been others in your position
Youthful and fragile as a baby chick in its nest waiting to be
snatched
By a hungry wolf like myself
And all my once students who were never found
Because I craved them more as my dolls on my stage back when I
ruled classrooms
As a common theater teacher conducting Shakespeare as my weap-
on
and yet none of them ever found for I have put them on a stage
forever as stone
forever in poses of the acts of plays I deem worthy of them to
have

As for you little sparrow walking lone on this night
Down the alley we share
I hope terror will be in this dense air
Marking my infamous mark I have laid on this town for years
You're exactly what I need for a new piece of art I crave
Your hair perfect raven black
And lips a scarlet as fresh blood would surface
Lithe figure to mold in a pose for Hamlet
You my dear will be Ophelia
But I will not have you in stone
I will have you stuffed and kept soft so I can forever touch the
peach in your cheeks
Which perfect darkened eyes lay
How would you like being my prize
You're mine

LIMERICK

by Kelly Turk

My dog likes to bounce off the walls,
And bark and run throughout the halls,
But to all who intrude
In any way so rude
Know he first likes to go for the balls.

HAIKU

By Kelly Turk

An animal sees food across open field.
No shadows in between, but hunger drives.
Suddenly seen, shadows aren't deep enough.

THE BROKEN WALL

by Stephanie Thompson

Accustomed to observe, yet not involved.
It often listens to our lives, yet we
unsuspecting of the tales that are held.
Its inner being lined with secrets: vast.

All the souls being perched against its spine.
Perceiving each angst, revering their mirth.
For them it longs, wishing to give them hope.
Unable to embrace them, it remains alone.

Kept always in one place, never moving.
With holes that gape through it's vertical frame.
Brought forth by shudders of the earths dwelling.
These cracks exposing all its depths unknown.

Yet, through these apertures, its light will shine.
Guiding all who sits beneath its shadow.
Offering voiceless aid, to those in need.
It remains broken, yet still together.

TABASCO

by McKenzie Buchanan

The tip of tongue, oh it delights with taste
For I have Tabasco tickling my buds.
Many who try it, seek water with haste
My food like Noah's, well it's drowned in floods

It matters not whether it's fried or plain
It's made better spicy, delicious flame.
Cover my breakfast, come on make it rain,
I find your ketchup entirely lame.

So sad is the day, when we eat a meal,
And find out together, our sauce is gone.
Don't try and tell me it's not a big deal.
Cholula is naught but a simple con.

My fridge will have always, such great delight
My bottled Tabasco, oh lovely sight

GLASS WALLS

by McKenzie Buchanan

These two glass walls go on forever,
One is real, one is not.
So like it our love is a beautiful endeavor,
One in feeling, one in thought.

But life is a reflection like on the water,
Cold is its gaze, like a fever but hotter.

We walk together, only ourselves by our sides,
To the crowd of people all seeking their guides.

Sterile my mind like burning passion,
The nature outside, looks in no compassion.

These two glass walls go on forever,
One is real, one is not.
So like it our love is a beautiful endeavor,
One in feeling, one in thought.

THE ASCENT

by Stephanie Thompson

Unstable and uncertain: life's a climb.
ascend the tree, cling to the spine; and yet,
uncertainty will seize at any time.
With fight you rise, with fear you will decline.

You're given choice of which branch you will take.

Yet each one that you grab determines fate.
Some branches support you; some branches break.
Take heed, dear heart, for the unknown awaits.

For you aren't guaranteed a single day's gain.
Yet, even in falling you can be saved.
For we are united: as one we strain.
For in our plummet, refinement is made.

The beauty of life can truly be found
If we, the climbers, will just look around.

habits relentlessly and soon knew them to the core of their DNA. Finally, when we fully knew them, a few of us began the year's long journey to the crust. Seven of us traveled to the inhospitable surface to greet the strangers and share with them the knowledge that their ships no longer had to search the sky; what they needed most lay below their feet.

When we arrived on the surface we were surprised to see that in our travels the colonies expanded over the entire surface of our planet. Cities threw their arms across the landscape and stretched their necks far into the sky. Passages cut strips across the landscape and connected each city to the ones that surrounded it on every side. Complex networks connected the sections of the cities where the strangers lived, worked, and played. Our greeting was met with silence; the visitors were gone.

On the outskirts of one city, facing away into the oblivion of space, we found one lone creature slumped against a glass wall. As we approached him, his head slid around and for a brief moment fear overtook his features. Just as quickly as it had crossed his face, the fear receded and passiveness melted his stare. His eyes became as glassed over as the pane he rested against.

"I finally found the aliens," he said, as his eyes closed and remained shut for all eternity.

The lone visitor passed along with the rest of them, but the bodies remained on our planet; and so did their thoughts and dreams. We looked on their buildings and cities, and images flashed through our minds of even smaller creatures with six legs and antennae. The creatures lived on the visitor's home planet and their legs constantly ran, moved, built, and destroyed. They would create elaborate structures of tunnels, walls, and rooms, then leave behind only a mound to mark the spot where they once thrived. The mound would be taken with the wind, and a new colony of ants would soon reclaim the spot and start the process over again.



SCIENTIST

by McKenzie Buchanan

A scientist is all I'll ever be.
Dissecting organs, looking deep inside,
For hearts of men are all I want to see.

I want to know what makes a heart like thee.
To see what makes you tick without my pride.
A scientist is all I'll ever be.

From this destiny I fight and I flee
My every dream lost in the genocide
For hearts of men are all I want to see

A heart in chains, I want to be set free.
This fate I have, as the unwilling bride.
A scientist is all I'll ever be

To see beyond the carnal flesh is key
But beastly man in me is far and wide
For hearts of men are all I want to see

I'm blind to hope, I cry in desperate plea
My soul is Jekyll, but my mind is Hyde
A scientist is all I'll ever be
For hearts of men are all I want to see

THE PIONEERS

by Tori D. Sheets

A bright flash sent stark shadows across craters and boulders when the engines collided with solid rock. Flames shot silently skywards and outwards as the kerosene jet fuel exploded across the atmosphere-less surface of our planet. The craft rested – for a moment – then out rushed a swarm. All clad in pressurized suits, as soon as the strangers' feet touched the rocky surface of our planet we knew them. The pulsating electrical fields coming from their brains told us what planet they came from, their language, why they came, and anything else stored in their memories.

Everyday we watched in wonder as they changed tanks connected to their atmosphere-imitation suits. The tanks were filled with imported oxygen from ships that landed more gracefully than the pioneer. Under the suits they needed endless amounts of water, powders, and vitamin-rich dried foods. Despite the lack of resources, up sprang a sprawling colony of over two hundred individuals in merely one of our years.

As more of them arrived, more children took their first breaths and steps on our planet. The colony reached outwards and expanded, creeping across the surface of the planet. In only two trips-around-the-sun the population tripled. A son saw his father's death, his own children's birth and maturation, and then he also died, all in a single rotation.

Below the surface we marveled at the pace at which the newcomers built, destroyed, created new life, and even took life away from one another. Deep in the heart of our planet we consumed the same oxygen that the ones above coveted. The core of our planet was in a constant state of chemical reaction, the result of which provided us with the same elements the newcomers imported to sustain themselves. The pace of our lives was slow compared to theirs; life and death fell within one hundred passes of the sun.

The strangers' existence marveled us. We studied their

WICKED WINTER

by Chey Shifflett

Before the cold and frosted winter morn,
A sneaky, angry, buzzing winter night,
Did kill the grass and roses sharp, still thorn.

Poor damaged field of freshly growing corn.
The solemn winds go wicked out of spite.
Before the cold and frosted winter morn.

All shutters from the house are surely torn.
The winter's rage did damage all in sight,
Did kill the grass and roses sharp still thorn.

To silence every living thing was sworn.
An enemy; the winter fights to fright.
Before the cold and frosted winter morn.

The sun tries hard to grow the field; reborn.
In hopes to melt the barren fields of white,
Did kill the grass and roses sharp still thorn.

Although the frost, a simple green is born.
The only living thing around in sight.
Before the cold and frosted winter morn,
Did kill the grass and roses sharp, still thorn.

FLOWER

by McKenzie Buchanan

Flower, Flower, on that sill
Oh thy sweet and bitter will
I beg don't leave me here alone
I will for you my sins atone

Flower, Flower, of my heart
I beg of thee please don't depart
Don't leave me here consumed by sin
Please open up and let me in

Flower, Flower, please don't delay
I long for you throughout the day
With clouded gaze I look at thee
Yet only perfection do I see

Flower, Flower, oh my delight
Please stay with me throughout the night
For you I will give everything,
Face the lashes feel the sting

Flower, Flower, oh my love
With the softness of the dove.
Settle in your glassy tomb
And grow new life like a womb.

SONDER

by McKenzie Buchanan

The thoughts of others permeate the mind,
How they have souls and thoughts that are their own.
That all the people passing quickly by
Have thoughts that are entirely unique.

They have their own perspective on the world.
A word that makes them laugh, and things that make
Them cry. A light and dark unto themselves.
This Sonder that we have to share or hold.

A cure to vapid cold indifference.
The Introspective end of selfishness.
Thus Sonder smites the insolence of self.
Its name alone speaks to a higher cause.

A word that has its own majestic depth.
Such depth can be unearthed in naming words.
It's strange. But real. The soul and wonder fused
To make a beautiful cacophony.

Such thought and wonder: Deafening the noise
That speaks the voice of self above all else
And makes in us a new and better man,
With beautiful endeavors in the heart.

Your voice shakes as you call out to your neighbor. An echo bounces back and forth to greet you, cutting through a constant buzz. You reach out your hands, hoping something will present itself to guide you; a wall, a banister, something to hold on to.

The floor sags beneath you as you walk, a constant creak that keeps you on your toes, but something about the creaking does not sound right, it sounds as if it comes from up above.

Before you get the chance to turn away, to think, to scream, to run, the man who killed and stuffed your neighbor holds your quilted head back, until the bags of sawdust fill you up.

The bathroom is near, lighthouse themed, from floor to ceiling. Another theme presents itself by the light of the moon, through cracks in the dust coated, navy blue shutters; dark brown crust, falling in flakes from the walls of tile, onto broken figurines of seahorses and starfish. The shower curtain is pulled shut, but it does not subtract from the constant, blasting, buzzing in the porcelain bathtub, a fervent moan of frenzied flies.

Around the corner is the kitchen, once butter yellow, now dirt, or rot, or decay. A bunch of brown bananas begin to liquify on the greasy countertop, a battle between ripe and rotten.

This kitchen has not been cooked in for weeks, the drawers lay silent, no clink of fork or spoon, the pantry; a factory of dust and dry and dark. To the right of the kitchen is the living room, decorated in lace, frill and mason jars packed tight with stale magnolia potpourri.

High oak shelves line the walls, packed with trinkets of precious moments, glass figurines and dusty porcelain angels, a constant prayer looking out upon the occupied couch.

The woman sitting there has not moved in days, however, she is no longer a woman. The last time she was, her heart stopped when saw the man moving in the corner.

Now, she is stiff and rigid. Her face, a hollow sham; stares crooked at the corner. Her skin silently screaming, the blue-grey matter pulled taut and sewn with twine at her edges; a quilt of cold and rot.

To the left, the front door remains unlocked, waiting to reveal the house's secret. You stand outside the door with your hand on the knob; a concerned neighbor questioning a smell that has crept its way into your home. The darkness of the thick, black night surrounds you, an envelope of cricket song and musk; a stench that burns your nostrils and your eyelids. Your stomach twists and ties itself in knots.

You've knocked and called the woman's name a few times, but the decay in the air has forced its way into your mouth. You push the door open, searching blindly for a light switch, or a lamp or a match; something to distract your eyes from burning.

OPTIMISTIC PESSIMIST

by Shanice Cameron

I scream aloud but no one hears my cries
The peace I seek it hides its face for now
I dream of tranquil winds and brighter skies.

Of days so full of rest, no time for ties
Unbothered by the world don't ask me how
I scream aloud but no one hears my cries.

The hurt, the pain, the agony of lies
So anxiously, I wait for eyes that row
I dream of tranquil winds and brighter skies.

There's hope! If I arrive then that's my prize
Embrace this moment here this is my vow
I scream aloud but no one hears my cries.

This place I'm in right now I do despise
The seasons gone and now I'm on the prowl
I dream of tranquil winds and brighter skies.

I can, I will, I must no compromise
With faith I know I'll make it there some how
I scream aloud but no one hears my cries.
I dream of tranquil winds and brighter skies.

A GARDEN 'CLOSED, A FOUNTAIN SEALED

by David Carlson

My one true love is as a garden 'closed.
Her love for me is as a fountain sealed.
Untouched, through love, her beauty is exposed.
Unpressed, her kisses she, to me, does yield.
My love for her is as the reddest rose,
her purity is as the lily fair.
In song she sings as sweetly as the doves.
When me she kisses she is all my care.
But if pursued, just like the violet,
she shrinks away. And if coerced, her love
will close, as flow'rs are wont when sun does set,
and die, as flow'rs without the sun above.
Her garden ope's with patience kind
and tenderness unseals her love within.

My mother raised me by herself,
Because that's how our story was written.
We needed no broad chested men, we built orange groves together.
We built love straight up from the ground,
Pulled it from broken rubble and made it whole again.

My mother will tell you stories about me when I was small,
But I will tell you this,
My mother's story is really mine.
She just doesn't want to say it out loud.
So I look into her eyes, the eyes that are my own.
And I say "this is the last beautiful poem I will ever write."

THE QUILTER

By Chey Shifflett

The corner of the room is filled with particles of dust,
dead skin and crumbs of something that once was nibbled on by
mice, when vermin felt comfortable enough to poke their pointed
faces out of hiding. A dull penny is not far from the corner, lying
facedown, a bad omen; a lurking symbol of bad luck. This is not
the only amount of money left within the house, but it is close
enough.

Farther from the penny is the bedroom door, once white
with shining golden knob and seamless, smooth, gold hinges, now
sits gray, ajar, slowly creaking open and closing as the lungs of the
house; a constant draft that smells of dirt and mold and something
else. The hallway leading from the room is carpeted, but poorly so.
The lining pulls away from the wall, allowing gray linoleum to
show through; tears from claws of dogs.

What once was salmon and soft is now brown and matted,
decades of pet dander and dirt; caked thick by paws now buried in
the back yard.

THE LAST BEAUTIFUL POEM

by Chey Shifflett

When I was small my mother told me
Stories of how my ancestors sailed on Spanish ships.
All the men in my family had dirt and glory caked under their
nails.
These broad chested men spoke beautiful poetry
And so naturally bore strong men who bore stronger men,
Who built villages, and families who built orange groves together.
These men built women straight up from the ground,
Pulled them from broken rubble and made them whole again.

And I said Stop.
Those women are not you.
Those women will never be you.
I said mother your arms were formed in the Garden of Eden.
The tree of knowledge was cut down to be carved into your
bones.
And I know this to be true,
Because when your arms reach around me I can feel grandma.
Your arms reach around me and I can feel the women in our
family burning.
And I say mother why die by flame when you've been on fire all
along?

The stories of the women in my family have been burning for
centuries,
But I've heard a few and my favorite story of all is the one where
My father took his last breath, and my mother kissed death
straight from his lips,
Trying to hold on to his beautiful poetry.
Even though all he had ever done was try to extinguish her flame.

THE KNIGHT OF BLOOD

by Autumn Harper

A heart of gold that beats for love of blood,
His king and queen of gracious strength, with oath
To guard the royalty with loyalty,
The knight defends his kingdom realm in dark.

He walks around the castle garden maze,
And hears his lovely princess sing about
A rose with petals soft, the color pink
For hope. He heeds her golden beauty. Smiles.

A sudden wail as maid unveils from bush.
The servants charge, intent on treason. Die!
Cascade of rain the shade of red, she falls,
Her highness speared by those she trusted most.

Unleash the beast of rage! The soldier keens
A tune of hate. Like trails of fire, tears burn
His cheeks. Despair, a loss of soul, of mate,
of light; His flower gone, forever lost.

His soul aflame, a roar of murder, cry
Of war. The sword is drawn, desire to kill
Intense, as warrior eliminates
The evil. Slackened figures ring the maze.

The angst of time is stilled, the knight is dead;
His life remains, but soul no longer lives
As weapon coat with red reveals his sin.
A heart of gold that beats for love of blood.

POETRY NONSENSE

by Autumn Harper

The life of poetry is such a pain;
Rhyme this, fix that, it is all in vain.
Do you know the stress
That comes with this mess?
Why don't you just hit me with a train?

CARHART WINTER

by Jason Herbert

Winter here
sees the smoke fumes plummeting
From inside Carhart teepees
In bases of soiled sweatpants
Upon the corners of streets

They pray to a faded neck tattoo
That still radiates the heat
From the sunburn
Of three years ago

She is a goddess that places a lit cigarette
Between the gaps in her teeth
And her lipstick

Smudges across her cheek
And honesty grows from her brow

I'LL LOVE HER ALWAYS

by Dathan Reeves

When first we met, my eyes were wide and raised
Because her blushing cheeks were righteously
Divine with passions forcing *me* quite dazed
And stuttering some words excitedly.

If ever angels fell from heaven's gates,
But kept intact their Godly given grace,
The proof before me ended all debates;
Her beauty looked a Godly given face.

Though dark days come for her in earthly sky,
And come they will, not one they will dismiss.
This angel Heaven sent my wife and I
Will prosper under us, I promise this.

I loved her first when she was born a tot,
I'll love her always, often more than not.

NOT AS IMPORTANT

by Dathan Reeves

It's set, the slicing of my skin. How quaint
The sounds my hands on solid walls create,
Since *this* heart's sorrow causes only taint.

They tell me, "You're not Us," as if their feint
Reminder wakes me from my selfish state.
It's set the slicing of my skin. How quaint.

If I desire to give a small complaint
Of pains I've had, they say, 'You should be sate
Since *this* heart's sorrow causes only taint.'

They say that since I'm privileged – have restraint!
They claim to know and understand too late,
It's set, the slicing of my skin. How quaint.

How dare they force my words with this restraint!
How dare they claim my words are pity-bait
Since, "*This* heart's sorrow causes only taint."

Well now I'm tired, now I'm through. My plaint
With others gave me nothing pure but hate.
It's set the slicing of my skin. How quaint,
Since *this* heart's sorrow causes only taint.

In gray whispers

Against the bleached ambitions
Of youth

And the mornings shiver us from dirty sheets
The smell of an unwashed pillow
Beaten down and stained
Atop a mattress
Of burn marks
That turn into hieroglyphs

They meet at the intersecting of 45th
And Coulter street
With cigarette lamps
Guiding them through the dark headlights
Till they reach Carhart wagons
Of home

BORN TO WRITE

by Moriah Buchanan

The written word is something close to heart
I love to write, the place I always turn.
I focus on the page, it's time to start
To write with truth and beauty: this I yearn.

The wordless page gives life unto my soul
I see such possibilities appear
Perhaps this marks the start of writing whole
A novel, fiction, all the crowds will cheer!

The words that once brought life are now untouched
Collecting dust, they'll never be adored.
My words seem not my own, they're left unclutched.
My heart breaks. Works unfinished, unexplored-

My imperfection begs me to regret
But I'm not giving up. Not over yet.

Observes and glistens at the starry swarm;

...Come closer, nearer, trip the iron trap.
...Come closer, nearer, slip that hidden strap.

“Now speak, thou speak! My slave shall *not* be mute!
I'll know your Godless name, then take your flute!”

“My name is Legion; We are many. Thee?”
It's tone, disturbingly, was full of glee.

...It mustn't know my stress, for *my* own sake.
Tis just its flute's control I need to take.

*“Our flute is not for mortal lips to play,
The consequences out of it will flay*

*Your love, replaced with hate, and demon's skin
Will seal your frame, for you, as well your kin.*

*So answer Master loudly, wolves do howl,
Tonight, whilst thou own fate be just as fowl
As mine? Do your temptations trump my own?
Do you accept what God does not condone?”*

INSTRUMENTS OF THE FALLEN

by Dathan Reeves

A wolf compelled by moonstone, tooth for blood,
Did eat my sister up in black-tarred mud;

With Wolf alive, her flesh still gorged inside,
She stays in chains, at Purgatory's side.

And death for such an animal requires
A demon's flute to soothe its brute desires.

So months now, every book with every spell
For governed eyes like mine was found to dwell

For HIS, the Serpent's, foul temptation hex:
His Godless, vile ability to vex

Its captives thick and credulous to lies
Of contracts signed in blood for their demise.

My search did end on Hallows frozen night,
With darkness weighted, rounded moon all bright.

This book, when found, helped teach me all the ways
To trip a demon into trade with blase.

*"The only night the demons roam about
Is Hallows Eve, when evil loves to sprout!"*

*"The Demons' psyches gain nostalgic thought
Of days before its skin was left to rot."*

Tonight! My only chance to act's tonight!
Tonight, the moon does 'wake completely bright!

...A thing that's human only from its form

HIGHWAY HELLHOUNDS

By Katharine Kerr

Probably the most obnoxious thing about being a cop in a small town is having to consistently investigate calls of "strange happenings." Every couple of months we'll get a worried citizen calling about haunted lights at the abandoned drive-in theatre or someone raving about how their cat was kidnapped by a ghost. Generally the perpetrators of these sorts of cases turn out to be bored teenagers with flashlights. However, three nights ago the station received word of a car crash that occurred just outside of town on the section of Route 66 that runs nearby.

The driver reported the car being swarmed by large, fiery creatures before they swerved off the road and crashed into the ditch. Considering the driver's concussion at the time, we were prepared to write the testimony off as hallucination had it not been for a second crash that occurred 12 hours later... in the same spot. The driver of the second car reported similar sightings: creatures that leapt out of nowhere while spontaneously combusting into flame. Admittedly most of us at the station thought it was all malarkey, but two crashes in the same area was too coincidental to be ignored. The fourth night after the accidents occurred, the Chief dispatched myself and a deputy to do a stake out near the crash site to gain any possible leads on the case. After sundown we hopped in an unmarked cop car and headed for the highway. On the way there we pulled into a gas station to pick up some snacks to keep us awake through an empty night. I filled up cups of cheap gas station coffee while the deputy nabbed a package of donuts just for the irony. After paying the cashier, we pulled away and drove to the crash site. Upon arrival we could see in the headlights two sets of tire streaks on the pavement that lead into the ditch. I slowly turned the car off the pavement and parked on the grass.

"I say we make a bet on what this turns out to be." The deputy said as I turned the engine off.

“Honestly, I’m betting that whoever did this fled to another city. They probably know we’re on to them.” I said as I picked up my coffee and flipped the tab up on the lid.

“Aw, you’re no fun.” The deputy said as he pulled the bag of mini donuts open. As I put the coffee cup to my lips, a car passed us on the same side of the highway. In a sudden flurry of motion, the car screeched into the other lane and drove straight off the road into the ditch.

“What was that?” I exclaimed as I tried to wipe up the coffee I had spilled.

“Call dispatch.” The deputy said as he opened the door. I pulled the radio off my belt and stepped out.

“Officer Charlotte to dispatch. We’ve got another accident.” I reported as I began crossing the road.

“Officer, what is your current location?” The radio answered.

“Route 66, just north of...” Before I could finish, I felt the deputy take hold of my right arm. Surprised, I looked back to see the deputy staring ahead, wide eyed. I followed his gaze and saw a silhouette of a large creature. It was inky black against the dark of the night, and I could barely make out the four legs it stood on.

“Officer repeat, what is your location?”

The creature suddenly turned around and revealed glowing red eyes, and a fully exposed canine looking skull.

“Back to the car.” The deputy whispered as he moved backwards, still holding my arm. Noticing our movement, the hound bared its teeth and snarled as it stepped forward in our direction. It then raised its head to the sky and let out a shrieking

HAIKU

By Dathan Reeves

Oh bright stars
That light up an icy sky,
Watch over me.

LIMERICK

by Dathan Reeves

I honestly don’t see any point in living here,
All of the streets for three blocks smell of piss and beer,
The art’s pretentious,
The people make me contentious,
Really, the city makes me pray that Armageddon is near.

“What guy?” He looked up at me his light brown eyes looked even darker now. I simply nodded.

“Well Tommy, why do you keep coming and getting in bed with me at night?”

“You tell me too, Mommy.” He looked back down at his cereal and took another bite.

I gasped slightly. “Oh that’s right I do.” I laughed lightly to shake off the fact that my skin was crawling. I let him finish his breakfast as I stared out the kitchen window trying to piece together what Tommy was saying. I heard Tommy giggle and I quickly turned my head and looked at him.

“What’s funny, sweetie?” I whispered.

“You, Mommy.” He smiled at me.

For a few nights nothing happened, no screaming in my dreams, and in the morning when I would wake up Tommy wouldn’t be in bed with me. I walked over to his room and he lay in his bed peacefully sleeping. I smiled as things seemed to return back to normal. Tommy would get up, brush his teeth, and make his way down to breakfast. I heard his feet lightly hit the floor as he made his way into the kitchen, sat down, and began eating his cereal. The only difference was Tommy wouldn’t say anything to me. He was completely silent. That night I went into Tommy’s room and we did our nightly ritual. I finished reading the book and tucked him into bed.

“Mommy?” He spoke quietly.

“Yes, sweetie?” I smiled down at him. He motioned for me to come closer, so I leaned down.

“Will you check for monsters under my bed?” I nodded slowly and thought how odd he never asked me to do this before. I lowered down and looked underneath his bed to please him, but I see him, another Tommy, under the bed, staring back at me shaking and whispering.

“Mommy there’s somebody in my bed.”

howl that turned its coat into flames. With the highway drenched in orange light, I could now see the road sign that read “Route 666.”

HOLLOW THUNDER

by Delinda King

It was Spring and it was glorious. The 1200 cc Custom Harley was eating up miles of pavement like a ravenous lion on a downed antelope, its singular thunder proclaiming blacktop jungle supremacy. Olivia leaned back, enjoying the vibration beneath her and the wind flicking tendrils of hair around her face.

Twelve hundred miles and she had savored every moment of the ride. Jack was a most considerate traveling companion. Her every wish had been fulfilled. Take me down the road least traveled. Done. Feed me. Done. Buy me something. Done. He often knew what she wanted before she recognized her own desire. Olivia thought if she could love, she would love Jack. But she couldn’t. And she didn’t. And anyway he had a few flaws.

Closing her eyes, Olivia remembered the sights from the roads they had traveled. In Oklahoma, there were fields of clustered grass blown over by the wind until they resembled acres of Donald Trump’s hair. A tree in Colorado, straight and tall except for two limbs that stuck out like skinny bent legs. In her imagination, Olivia saw an old man in the tree, bent over with his head and trunk stuck in a knothole forever. It was funny. But her favorite sites were the dead people places. The dried up small towns and abandoned gas stations that housed only ghosts and memories.

Jack reached back and ran his hand up her leg. Combined with the roar of the motor and the excitement of the open road, the touch was thrilling. She massaged his shoulders with an unspoken promise of later pleasure. Sensing her meaning, Jack leaned his head back and belly-laughed into the wind. That's when it happened. The other driver, not paying attention, was suddenly in their lane. For Olivia, time stopped, but her body kept moving through the air, over the other vehicle, landing with a bone-crushing thud a hundred feet from the accident.

Time commenced again some time later, bringing Olivia to her painful senses. She knew that her right arm was broken and turning her head sent white hot pain to every limb. She closed her eyes again, straining to gain control of the agonizing fire that was her body. The world around her was as quiet as a snow laden morning. Where is Jack? Turning her head slightly, she could see him, motionless, in a ditch twenty feet away. She could also see the bike; the once beautiful and powerful machine crushed and subjugated by a larger beast. One deep breath and suddenly she felt able to move.

Olivia scanned the scene around her. Jack never moved. Walking toward him, she glanced at the rolled SUV, noticing the pretty young woman inside was also still, held upright by an inflated airbag, her head thrown back. Deciding the woman was dead, she scanned the horizon in all directions, hoping for help. The road was long, and hot, and empty in both directions. As she reached Jack's side, she knew he also was no longer with her. On his back, with his neck at an impossible angle, he was now only a discarded mass of mangled flesh. His startling blue eyes stared into the warm spring sun as if he wanted one last look, once last whiff, of the budding world around him. The rugged face, that sported a week old beard, relaxed in peaceful acceptance of his fate. Olivia bent down and slipped the skull ring with its diamond

A NEW BEGINNING...

by Kyrista Powers-Proby

I was ready for a new start. A new home, new town, new everything. I left my last horrible marriage with the clothes on my back and my five year old son. The new house we were moving into was absolutely beautiful. It was yellow, with a huge front window that overlooked the yard which was now covered with leaves. It was an upstairs house, the type of house I wanted to live in since I was little. My dark curly haired little boy looked up at me smiling, "Mommy, I love it." He beamed.

I moved the brown hair that had blown in my face back behind my ears. "I do too, Tommy." I smiled back at him as we started moving our things into the new house. Once we were settled in and comfortable Tommy and I did our nightly routine. I would read him a bedtime story, tuck him into bed, and quietly leave the room as he slept. The house was quiet as I got into bed and easily drifted to sleep. While I was dreaming I kept hearing gut-wrenching screams that would awaken me to a quiet house. I stretched and turned around in bed and nearly screamed as Tommy stood right next to me staring blankly at me.

"Honey, what's wrong?" I asked once I could breathe again.

"He won't let me sleep, can I sleep with you?" He asked as he crawled in bed next to me.

"He?" I breathed, but Tommy was already asleep.

As time went on that instance started happening every night. When I would wake up in the morning, Tommy would have scratches on his back or bruises on his leg. I figured it was from him sleeping so badly, but he never complained that they hurt. At breakfast one morning I looked over at Tommy as he ate his cereal.

"Honey, who is he and why won't he let you sleep?" I asked him.

"I don't know." He responded simply.

"You don't know who he is? The guy that you tell me about at night?"

flash and daze my brother's vision. The demon didn't like it.

He stands up, a slow motion of a locomotion and with the blare of the train's whistle, Dustin lets out a murderous scream. His body begins to twist like a serpent, his arms lock up next to him, and his mouth begins to vomit. The street seemed deserted, only me and the demon. I saw my brother's back snap back as he becomes a serpent on the ground slithering. I panic; I run up to Dustin screaming, "Leave him alone!" I kick him in the tender part of the neck and watched him stop moving. Blood drips from the side of his lifeless mouth. I scream.

eyes from his finger. She closed her eyes to picture the moment he bought it. They were so happy that day. He laughed and joked and spent loads of money, pretending he was as loaded as a Rothschild, or maybe Bill Gates. Reaching in the pocket of his torn and blood-stained jeans she groped for the wad of bills. Finally freeing it, she counted out over a thousand dollars in cash. Considering only for a moment, she shoved the money in her pocket.

"His widow will have insurance," she said.

Olivia sunk to the ground beside Jack's chilling body. She picked bits of grass from her dark, waist length braid, and bits of gravel from her cheek. Suddenly she heard the familiar deep-as-death thunder of an approaching motorcycle. Grabbing a bunch of grass, she wiped Jack's blood from her boots, marveling that she no longer hurt.

As she reached the edge of the road, the rider stopped in front of her. A chill ran down Olivia's spine as she gazed into the vacant black eyes. For some reason she couldn't resist the urge to obey the irresistibly handsome and horrifying being.

"Get on doll," the hollow voice ordered, "you are going for the ride to end all rides."

Olivia mounted the bike and the couple moved smoothly out onto an endless highway.

Cavernous night enveloped the pair. Frantic and frightened, Olivia cried out hopefully,

"It's spring and it is glorious!"

-The End-

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

by Nessa Locke

Jukebox music fills my head,
a Rock-n-Roll lullaby.
Across the smoky dim-lit room
my long-lost love I spy.

A moment takes an hour to pass.
This seems like déjà vu.
A flash of emerald winks at me.
I know he sees me too.

A gentle nod to him I give.
Won't let him think I'm rude.
The knowledge that he lingers there
Lightens my drunken mood.

Our conversation picks right up
as if no time has passed.
We dance around like lovers do.
We fall, and we fall fast.

We talk about the silly things,
My job, his new tattoos.
He asks about my mom and dad.
We talk about the news.

How did I end up close to him?
So natural does it seem
to feel his touch caress my face,
never asking what it means.

A thousand years have passed us by,
a million endless days.
But now beneath his smile I stand.

I grab toilet paper from our stash in case the end of the world happens, only reason why you would stalk up so much toilet paper. I take two ends of two different rolls and tape one each end to one of my wrist. I twist, unravel, and swirl them around my arms and while one end trails up and the other down, I start to notice that it isn't staying like I want it to. I look at the counter, but with little seeing room with the toilet paper in my face, I thought I was grabbing more tape, but instead I knock over an open orange pill bottle. The pills were like airplanes, flying across the bathroom then spur of the moment kamikaze pilots make them detonate and open up in little eruptions in the bathtub, toilet, and floor.

Mama knocks on the door and I shyly unlock the door, as she sees the mess of gutted pills, toilet paper, tape, and me blabbering excuses. Mama looks around as if it was a battlefield and laughs at the casualties until she steps on the remains of the kamikaze pills and begins to panic. She calls Dustin in and I begin to tear up and some reason all I can think of is how that girl's screaming head from that movie and how it twisted around and around! Dustin tries to calm my mother down, reassuring her that he would be okay, that epilepsy wouldn't get him... epilepsy? I scream.

--

Mama wants me to skip out of Halloween, but I can't. So Dustin reassures that epilepsy wouldn't hurt him. I don't know what that is but it sounds like a creepy demon's name. But I walk with Dustin down the street, dressed in an actual mummy costume; I didn't know Mama bought me one. I was kind of scared of Dustin, he tries to grab my hand, but I refuse for him to hold it. He may have a demon and I needed to stay away, even though he was my brother.

I have my bag of candy packed with sweets, and as I examine the contents of my bag, Dustin grabs my bag, "What's in here, did you get any Here?" I tell him to back away, as I push Dustin where he stumbles into an electric pumpkin that beings to

you. I really like you. Forgive me for I have sinned. Julia Sanders isn't my real name."

"Vanderville. You said your last name was Vanderville."

"Did I? So what must I pray to absolve my sins?"

I was speechless. I don't remember what happened after that. I could see myself raising the host and consecrating the bread and wine into their holy entities. The Eucharist and Blood even tasted bitter in fear of poison. I would pretend—lie—to myself that Julia Vanderville never existed. But I knew that Julia, even though that's not her name, will haunt us all forever. Tomorrow is a long ways away, but forever can happen in a matter of seconds.

I watch, after mass, the crowd of people leaving the mass with their partners. All I could wonder was whether Julia was in that crowd. The glimmer of blonde hair and clicking of nails hidden in the confluence of the confessional and reality. I continue to shake hands and blessing people. Many replied, "Happy Valentine's Day, father." I will always hate that phrase.

A DEMON NAMED EPILEPSY

By Cristian J. Mora

Mama said I was old enough to go trick-or-treating. She said I could go by myself, well technically my big brother is taking me but he's not important. I mean, I am seven, but closer to eight! Mama insisted that Dustin come along but he isn't going to dress up, but I'm kind of glad because he usually steals my thunder. But not this time world, because I'm going to be the scariest mummy in the tri-state area.

Now, I wanted to spend my first Halloween of my seven year old manliness and independence by watching scary movies with Dustin. We watch the Exorcist and, although I shrug it off, I was so scared even though it was in the bright afternoon. Nothing scary happens in the daytime. Dustin laughed at me and said that there is no such thing as demons. So I cool down and try to get ready for the best night.

In his green eyes I gaze.

His tender kiss long overdue.
He whispers in my ear.
He knows exactly what to say,
just what I need to hear.

No tangled strings will keep us tied
No promises to keep.
No golden bands to weigh us down.
We sow, but we don't reap.

He slips into my bed again,
intentions still untold.
He has my hand inside of his,
but it's my heart he holds.

TRASH

By Nessa Locke

I'm not awake. I'm not.

I AM NOT AWAKE.

Crap. I am awake.

It's not the kind of barely awake where I can pretend I'm dreaming and slip back into unconsciousness as if awake had never happened.

I am fully, undeniably awake.

Blackbirds bicker in the eaves outside my window. Light sneaking under the blinds tells me I've fallen asleep on the wrong side of the bed. Another human being blocks the right side of the bed. Specifically, a man. I'm not sure if I should know him.

Great. Just what I need on top of the alcohol fog left over from last night. I move my head to peer at my new bed buddy. I can hear the slosh as my brain floats around in a skull full of tequila and salt.

He's sleeping with his back to me. He's hogging most of my bed and all of my blankets.

Territorial me wants to slug him in the shoulder and shove him aside, but hung over, self-loathing me lets him sleep. No need to rouse the beast, I think to myself.

Snippets of last night's activities begin to solidify into an actual memory. Flickers of mouth against mouth, flesh against flesh, screams of pleasure and pain. Empty promises.

Good gravy. What will my neighbors think?

I'm a quiet, shy girl. I do not have a wild side. I've never before now parked my car halfway in the yard at two in the morning, dragged my drunk ass into the house and had raunchy, loud fun with a man I just met—a man whose name I do not know, and cannot, for the life of me, recall right now.

Gregory? Gilbert?

I am obsessed with finding out what his name is. I think back to dinner, before the bar, before the booze, when Sandra introduced him. "This is my friend from work..." Galen? Garth?

I sit up and scan the floor for his pants. He has an I.D. in his wallet, right? I'll just slip it out and have a look before he wakes up. He'll never know.

My body is achy with the unfamiliar feeling of having been intimate. My thighs are sore, and my girls are bruised, and, dammit, I have a hickey.

I hop out of the bed and sort through the clothing that has been haphazardly slung in all directions: my skirt, my bra, his T-

had to make sure that never happened. Believe me, the attempt was intentional but after the first time of trying to fool him... I gave up on my attempt. It wasn't until months later when my deepest desire became reality. I was pregnant. That's when I made up my mind that Joe doesn't get to claim Jr. I wanted Jr. and Jr. is mine. Jr is old enough to take care of himself now; it's been years since he's actually come home."

I interjected, "What about this makes you want to do something—as you said—horrible?"

Her fingernails stopped clicking, "Joe has been cheating on me for ten months and fourteen days. I have known for ten months and a week. I have estimated and found the cost of what a divorce would cost, but I—as you can tell—am devoted to my faith. So a divorce is not an option. Joe didn't like hearing that." She became very quiet again. "So he brings her home. She has dinner in my dining room. Lays in my bed. And even uses my restroom. I know she's in my house every day. I feel it. Every single day. I can even bet she looks a lot like me, well, just a little more tightened up. Joe always says that if I won't give him a divorce then this is the way it's going to be. If I'm not home then... she is."

"I can absolve the marriage if you truly do not feel—"

"But I love him. I want him to be mine forever. And Jr. would have a fit knowing that I would be alone. Jr. really does care for me so much. Joe doesn't care about me. But I love Joe. I've always wondered that if love is cruel and God is loves... so does that mean that—"

I interjected, "But what does this have to do—"

"God is cruel, father." Julia then placed her hand on her knees. "Here is the truth. Tomorrow is a long ways away. But forever can happen in a matter of seconds. Tonight, at my Valentine's Day dinner, Joe agreed to share it alone with me. He said he wouldn't stay the night. No, of course not. But he won't make it to tonight. He will sip his wine or eat a bite of whatever I decide to make him and together... we get to spend the rest of eternity together. Forever and ever. I was thinking steak with yams and asparagus! He would love that."

"My God..."

"Don't swear father, we're in a church!" That's when Julia stood up. "I love that somebody knows the truth but I hate that it's

ST. VALENTINE'S CONFESSIONAL

by Cristian J. Mora

I have been a priest for Immaculate Conception for about twenty years now and I still have a thrill for St. Valentine's Feast! All these lovers experiencing mass together! Children feeling the love from Heaven above. I tuck my shirt in my pants and make sure that, after putting on my pink robes, my gray hair is intact. What? I have to make sure my last few gray hairs stick with me as long as possible! We have confession for an hour before the mass so I prepare for a busy confessional.

When I get to the confessional, it is oddly empty besides a single woman waiting. I notice her calm demeanor as she shakes my hand. I lead the blonde middle aged woman to the confessional and close the door behind her.

Our confessional is not the stereotypical kind you find in movies. This is a singular room with two chairs. One, my own, is turned to the side so that I can't see her but she can see me. Her chair is facing directly at me.

"What's your name, child?"

"Julia Vanderville..."

"Whenever you are ready."

Julia stared down at her lap and looks up sniffing. She must be crying, nothing unusual. That's when she said, "I think I'm about to do something horrible, father." I grip my hands and try not to lose this troubled soul.

"Have no fear, my child, I am here to hear you. What troubles you?"

Julia's nails are clicking against her small handbag but all I receive is silence. "Please child, have no fear."

"Forgive me, father, for I want to sin." Julia then gave her testimony. "I met Joe, my husband, at a party in college. He was your typical college kid. Loved college but hate actually working on the college part. He was... my man. Or so I have to make him believe. You see father, I confess that my child doesn't belong to Joe. Joe would die hearing that Jr. isn't his. Oh, this sounds wrong! I didn't cheat on Joe. It's just... Jr. is mine... I was so young and... Dear God, Holy God... I knew I was going to lose Joe so I

shirt, a stinky sock (most definitely his). I can't find the pants, and I am pissed off because this slumbering, blanket-stealing, bed-hogging, unnamed idiot is still in my house stinking up my air with his disgusting, dirty laundry.

"Hey, Gavin," I don't bother to whisper. I want him to get up, get out, and stay gone. I shove his shoulder with my fingertips, but he doesn't move. "Graham...Grady..." I shove harder and then shake, but the oaf is non-responsive. "Gordon." I grab his shoulder and roll him forcefully onto his back toward me.

...somebody is screaming. I think it's me.

Gunther lies on his back staring into nothing, and blood covers everything. I don't know how I didn't smell it before. I need to vomit. His neck is just a gaping hole. Somebody has slashed it. I'm sure I didn't do it. My stomach heaves. I retch onto the floor, not onto Griff. He's suffered enough. No need to add vomit to his list of woes.

"You WHORE!" A hiss comes from the corner of the room. "You think you meant anything to my Gabriel?" she whispers. She has a shotgun, and she points it right at me.

"Who's Gabriel?" I ask. I've never met a Gabriel in my life.

((((BANG!))))

I'm not dead. I'm not.

I AM NOT DEAD!

Shit. I am dead.

It's not the kind of dead that you can come back from. My chest stings on the ragged edges of the hole that used to be my heart. I won't be slinking back into life anytime today.

I am fully, undeniably dead.

I CAN'T GO WHERE YOU GO

by Nessa Locke

Don't you remember when you and I were just two kids sitting on the curb, tossing rocks into the street, talking about the future and where it would take us? Or the time we perched ourselves on top of the rusty railroad car, wondering if we stayed right there, where would we go? (I knew back then I would follow you anywhere.)

On Halloween we terrorized our little town by shooting your shaving gel on the windshield of every parked car. It turned cold and windy that night, so we cuddled on your porch swing and shared your jacket.

(That bridge we used to walk across isn't there anymore. They tore it down and put up something less frightening further down the way.)

That last night the world had frozen over. A thin sheet of ice covered everything from the wooden bridge planks under our feet to the heart barely beating in your chest. We watched the icicles fall one by one. They shattered on the frozen stream below and echoed against the rocky walls of the ravine.

You swung your legs over the railing, turned to face me from the other side and dared me to push you. I told you to piss off and quit playing around. You were trying to scare me and it worked. You said if I didn't push you, you'd jump anyway. I tried to act nonchalant. I shrugged my shoulder and said whatever.

(I knew you were just crazy enough to do it.)

You laughed and called me a wuss, and I tried to distract you with a kiss. You were so cold, but the kiss was so warm I lost all focus and melted into it. I didn't notice you were pulling me with you until it was too late.

INTERNAL ENEMY

by Megan K. Miller

Although my love for you has not an end,
It seems you have no love for me to spare.
In earnest I still seek you out and send
You gifts of quality made with great care.

Our destiny has always been entwined,
So why can we not get along at all?
Unreturned, my love consumes my mind.
You never miss a chance to start a brawl.

But some might say instead that it is I
Who takes advantage every chance I get
And fills you full of things that make you cry.
Without abuse from me, you'd throw no fit.

My adversary truly is my gut;
Lactose intolerance, you are a butt.

TIGHTROPE WIRE

by Megan K. Miller

You're almost everything that I desire,
Our paths and lives, they always intertwine,
So shall I stay or set this bridge on fire?

You work so hard, in much you do aspire,
Though times are tough, I never hear you whine,
You're almost everything that I desire.

Though things you say arouse in me an ire,
I question now your part in my design,
So shall I stay or set this bridge on fire?

Your heart is kind, it's true I do admire
Your strength, your wit, the way your blue eyes shine,
You're almost everything that I desire.

You wear your pride like finely sewn attire,
And yet it has a stench akin to swine,
So shall I stay or set this bridge on fire?

For now, I'll dance along this tightrope wire,
I'm searching, seeking, praying for a sign,
You're almost everything that I desire,
So shall I stay or set this bridge on fire?

I tried to hold on, I swear I did. I spread my wings to fly,
but I wasn't strong enough to carry you. FLY, damn you! I
screamed.

But you wouldn't spread your wings.

When you hit the ice below, there was no echo against the
rocks, no scream of regret, no blackbird's lonely call. There was
nothing but the empty, dull thud of hopelessness hitting bottom.

LIFE GOES ON

by Stephanie Milam

I've seen you love drunk,
Stumbling feet over your words,
Trampling beer bottles with poems,
Muttering synonyms of depression,
As if her kiss translates to self-love.
All hope forgotten,
Confusing her touch for a savior's,
But the blind should never lead the blind,
Fingertips touching but never feeling,
She can't save you from yourself,
But you accept every pamphlet she's giving,
You buy every box she's selling,
Knowing most are empty,
You carve out holes in your soul for her to burrow,
Only to find out later,
She wasn't the self-help book you thought she'd be--
Useful, but never free,
A sorrowful distraught story
Seems to be the key,
That unlocks the door between two souls
Who were never meant to be--
Don't mix up exceptions and excuses,
When you're lying in bed,
Staring at the darkness ahead,
The two go hand in hand--
The excuses you supply dance
Oh so wickedly with the exceptions you give,
She's the only exception
You make excuses for,
Stirring up controversy in your heart,
Distress in your chest,
A sure sign your heart has stopped
Pumping creativity to your hand,
Your pen has become a long lost best friend,

HAIKU

by Megan K. Miller

Summer dawns
The tide rolls in
Calling its patrons home

LIMERICK

by Megan K. Miller

His pants were covered in patches,
And in his pocket were matches;
The strike of a light
Created a sight
So hot, the fire, it catches.

A sweet tooth will stop at nothing--
Needs must be satisfied,
They also forgot to mention the irony snickers bring--

Hushed giggles and whispers in the hallway
when a girl gives her heart away.

Your rhymes seem to get weaker every time,
And yet, you try to keep spitting,
Because the mic was there consistently,
But every word syncs rhythmically,
With the fast paced beating you feel,
Every time you get an email from her--
Avoiding fighting fire with fire,
You wave your white flag,
End up lower than before the war,
Remember you had a life before her
And you will have a life after her,
Think of this pain as a reminder
You're still breathing,
Think of her memory as a lesson in leaving,
Karma's a bitch,
But she's owed nothing,
All debts paid now--
You are free from the shackles,
You can walk in the light again,
But most importantly,
You can love yourself again.

GIVING UP YOUR HEART

by Stephanie Milam

We were never taught what giving up our hearts feels like,
What slicing up our chest,
Cranking open our rib cage,
Hand in, pulling out veins
like earplugs under water--
What the pressure feels like,

Swallowing "I love you's" to alleviate the pain,
Telling ourselves "love" is something you do,
Not just something you say,
In eighth grade
We were given a reality check,
And after, I remember wondering what reality even was--

Girls and guys separated
like public restrooms,
Guys are told to watch out--
Crabs are everywhere and they jump like pole vaulters
but us girls are given a softer approach
toilet seat covers of information--

An older woman,
(Who was contraception herself) told us,
our purity was a candy bar
we can only share once,
And NO ONE wants a half-eaten candy bar
so oral counts,

Well excuse me if I'm just a wrapper by now
I found out the hard way guys are really into sharing,
Taking bites before passing me along
I'm empty now
sweet confections are hardly enough for reality concessions--
I'm not buying it lady,

When a girl is told she is beautiful one of two things will happen;
Either she will embrace it,
She will feel the beauty,
Like the satin of rose petals tickling her skin,
The words will dance with her body
before his skin touches

Or concentrated carefulness will consume her,
She will over analyze; dissect his tongue,
Decipher whether or not his taste buds are working--
The flavor of my name hits every one.
Salty then bitter,
Sour then sweet,

Sour Patch Kids marching down his throat,
The last of the candy I'm giving,
They didn't warn me I'd stay up late wondering,
If I ever slip into his mind,
Surrendering the most vulnerable parts of myself,
They didn't tell me to ask how many candy bars he already had,