"Thanks bebe."

Mid sip, the squall of the brakes made Bryan swivel on his stool to spy one of three metro buses glowing through the clotted darkness from the downtown stop across the street; its various lights of red, blue, orange, and white mixed with a pulsating synchronicity that created a carrousel effect minus the corny music. All were diesel; all idled loudly; each expelling a blast of air that hold them in place as the passengers conducted their transitions.

No one, not even Bryan, had seen him step from the bus to the pub's foyer. The door was heavy, much wider than most, the building having been used at one time to assemble Ford Model T's. The engines were assembled upstairs then "dropped" into the chassis's downstairs then drove out the odd door that was now be opened by a man who took a stand with mininum distance from inside. The man brought with him the laborious rattle of the diesel buses that choked out just enough of Patsy Cline's *Walkin After Midnight* to distract the pub's small population long enough to watch the door close itself, muffling the droll of the idling buses.

It is expected and customary, among the social requisites of pub culture, for the established patrons to give the one's who walk through the door a 5-7 second assessment before resuming course. One never knows, you may want to buy them a drink or, better yet, they buy you one, or you may want to avoid them, or get to know them—hard to say—but it's best practice to recognize whom you maybe sharing your time with. Once evaluated, the newcomer is greeted with eye contact along with either a smile (feminine/masculine), a slow nod up (confident-masculine), a quick nod down (insecure-masculine), or a silent, exaggerated, *"Hi"* followed by a Pepsodent pose of

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LITERALINES

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Statement of Policy and Purpose

The *Literalines* Editorial Board accepts original works of fiction, poetry, black and white photography and line drawings from students at IUPU Columbus and IUPUI. Each anonymous submission is reviewed by at least three members of the student editorial board and is judged solely on the basis of artistic merit.

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The Unconscious Dance
Amanda Norris

It is I, your siren, who beckons you in the night,

Aches for your presence,

And grieves, so far removed from your sight.

Distance, our ever-present foe,

Inflicts pain beyond our control.

But, together we dance in an unconscious state,

To the rhythm of longing,

And the melody of fate.

We can float together all the night long,

But with the dawn ends our sweet song.

With these dreams, reality can't compare.

I once again shut my eyes,

And wish for the day when I'll open them,

And you'll still be there.

Electric Crack
Alexandra Clark

Don't turn on
The Machine.
If you do,
It's on you.
Your fault,
Odysseus.

Open that door
And your life
Bleeds away –
Seconds into
Days into
Years.

You start
Harmlessly
A novice,
Playing
Solitaire or
Taipei.

Pot to crack
And soon
You are paging
Through the endless
Stream of world
Consciousness.

One destination
Leads to another
And another -
Linking together
In a vast
Voyage.

Sleep, food,
Conversation –
A traveler in
The Machine
"Craves not these
Things."

Even when
It is off,
Cold and dark,
It beckons.
It wheedles.
Circe.

It needs you
As much as
You need it.
The symbiosis
Is
Complete.

Walking Home
Steve Green

Harris glanced up at the sky through the matted chestnut hair that fell across his sad rheumy eyes. A brilliant flash of lightning zigzagged its way across the Seattle skyline and was immediately followed by a resounding thunderclap. The rain came in blustering torrents as Harris shuffled down the sidewalk, staying close to the buildings in an attempt to stay dry. "Blast this rain, blast this rain," he repeated over and over. Deep in the right pocket of his soggy black overcoat, he fingered the meager results of the day's work. The few coins he had gathered from the pitying citizenry commingled with some food he'd rummaged. Harris peered down a dark vacant alley. "Is this it?" he asked out loud. Grabbing his head with his aching, arthritic hands, Harris tried to think. He had to remember where he was going and why. "Blast this rain!" he screamed, but no one heard him. His heart pounded like a forge's hammer as his desperation turned to panic. Backing up against the cold wet bars that covered the entry door of Marco's Deli, Harris clutched his chest and slowly slid down the bars and crumpled onto the sidewalk. For several minutes he lay there shivering and gasping for breath, cold sweat mixing with the rain and streaming down his face.

"Hey you drunken bum, get a job why don't ya!" yelled a boy from the window of a passing carload of teens.

The yelling snapped Harris out of his panic attack. Struggling up to an elbow, he hollered after the departing car, "Get out of here you stinking punks!"

Slowly, grabbing the bars for support, he hoisted himself up and onto his feet. As rain began to soak through the outer layer of his Salvation Army attire and dampen the

inner ones, Harris began to compose himself. Taking in a deep breath, he scanned the street in both directions. "Harris, that's my name," he said matter-of-factly. Pausing for a second to consider what being Harris meant, he began to mutter, "Keep moving. That's what I'll do, keep moving." And that's what he did, one step at a time, glancing down the alleys as he passed. A patrol car's siren wailed in the distance and Harris moved on. Slowly, on worn out knees that ached with each step, he moved on.

Harris was fifty years old and living on the streets. He had been homeless for longer than he could remember, but then again Harris couldn't remember much of anything these days. He was born Harris Benson Bradford to middle class parents in San Francisco, California, and had lived a fairly average childhood, that is until the summer of nineteen sixty-seven, the "Summer of Love."

Back in nineteen sixty-seven, sex or drugs didn't tempt Harris, though both were readily available. It was the music that he couldn't resist. The Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane were dominating the local scene and Harris caught as many of their gigs as possible. All he cared about was the music and on his seventeenth birthday he bought a beat up Silvertone guitar from a Haight Asbury pawnshop and began to teach himself how to play. Over the years he played in lots of bands; The Earthtones and Lost Weekend were a couple of his most popular ones. Lost Weekend was a good, if not great, bar band. Harris hoped that with enough practice and enough exposure they would be discovered and signed to a recording contract. Well, that break never came. They never progressed beyond the bar scene in San Francisco, and in nineteen seventy-nine, at the age of twenty-eight, Harris packed his bags and headed north to Seattle. Seattle had its own music scene; one that he hoped would embrace his music and make him a star. In

Seattle it was more of the same, limited success and no realistic hope of a recording contract or stardom. While a good guitarist and a decent songwriter, he didn't have what it took to make it big. The fingers were already slowing down from an early onset of arthritis, and his songs were much too trite and unoriginal. He obviously wasn't going to make it. Harris turned to booze, and later on to drugs, to dull his mind. Eventually, he was thrown out of his own band. He didn't have the talent to perform solo and he began living on the streets. So now, in the year 2000, Harris was a long way from those days when dreams of stardom came like the Seattle rain.

"Aaargh, blast the rain," muttered Harris as he continued down the street. As if in response to his complaint the rain seemed to subside a bit and a grin spread from one whiskered cheek to the other. "Now that's better," he said to the stranger staring back at him from the reflection in the glass of the ACE Hardware store. "What a scroungey looking coot he is," he thought to himself as he wiped his nose on the sleeve of his drenched overcoat. Fumbling with the change in his pocket he moved on, a little more quickly now as if spurred on by the slackening rain. The cobwebs started to clear as he rounded Broadway and moved down Center St.; all the while the jingling of the change in his pocket became more pronounced. "That's it, blast you rain, go away, come again some other day," he laughed while his pace quickened and his smile spread to expose the black gums of his toothless mouth.

The flashing neon light was like the beacon of a lighthouse and Harris was a ship being guided home. "Cold Beer, Wine," it flashed as Harris exuberantly grasped the coins with one hand and the cold brass doorknob with the other. Stepping through the door, he

was recognized and addressed, "Well Harris, you're a little late tonight. Rain slow you down?"

"Blast the rain," answered Harris in a barely audible whisper.

"I know Harris, blast the rain. Anyway, let me see what you've got."

Harris pulled his knotted hand from the deep pocket of his overcoat. Slowly unfolding his hand, he let the coins fall to the countertop as Carl, the liquor-store manager looked on. Taking what he needed, Carl slid the rest of coins back, along with a bottle of Boone's Farm wrapped in a brown paper sack. "There you go Harris-- now you be careful going home," said Carl in all sincerity.

Without answering, Harris was through the door and back on the sidewalk. The rain had picked up again and thunderous rumbles followed faint flashes of light. The bottle of Boone's Farm joined what few coins Harris had left in the pocket of his overcoat.

Moving up the sidewalk he muttered to himself, "Where is it, is it here?" He peeked around the corner and strained to see what he had been looking for. "There you are," he said out loud as he approached the green dumpster with Seattle Sanitation painted on the side. Reaching behind the dumpster, Harris dragged out three old plastic milk cartons and positioned them like stairs. Raising the lid, he took two steps up, then slid over the edge and into the metal belly of the container. As the rain echoed off the lid,

Harris untwisted the cap and tasted the first gulp of the cheap rotgut. The only sound now was the comforting patter of rain on the thin metal lid.

Closing his eyes, listening, his chest rising in slow calm breaths, Harris whispered, "Goodnight rain, my old friend."

HEROES

Keith Persley

Coming down the mountain
You see it in their eyes
Men with war-like faces
Underneath dawn-set skies

Coming down the mountain
Hundreds feet, tremble ground
Men with war-like faces
Charge at the trumpet's sound

Coming down the mountain
You hear men's battle cry
Men with war-like faces
Ready to fight and die

Coming down the mountain
Heroes are honor bound
Men with war-like faces
From their back, swing shields 'round

Coming down the mountain
Where banners fly so high
Men with war-like faces
Blood soaked souls that ne'er dry

Coming down the mountain
You feel hearts' heavy pound
Men with war-like faces
New heroes to be crowned

Coming down the mountain
War has become awry
Men with war-like faces
Leaving dead where they lie

Coming down the mountain
Heroes' burial ground
Men with war-like faces
No more battle sound

One
Joe Garcia

Bass thudding,
like thunder in the sky,
blood through my veins.

Glow-sticks, feather boas, and lasers,
eye candy
but not too distracting.
People moving to the beat of the music.

The smell and taste of sweat
Running
down
my face.

No longer
Thinking.
No longer
Conscious
of what I do.

Moving,
only to the beat
and groove
of the music.

My throat becomes dry,
I push myself harder.
Pausing —
Only to take a drink —
And back on the Beat.

Perfection and Judgment
matter not now,
Only the Beat.

I am Everything,
yet nothing.
One with the people around me,
yet an Individual in my own right.
Alive —
yet dead to the world around me.

Nothing matters but the Music and the Vibe.

Crawl Space
Steve Green

I hate the thought of crawling down
Into the hole down in the ground
Crawl space damp and dark and cold
Spiders mice and bugs untold
Live down in
The hole

Smell of musty dirty earth
Rushes up to strangle me
Squeeze the air out of my lungs
And make my skin crawl like the bugs
That
Live down in
The hole

Don't make me go down in
The hole

Don't want to go down in
The hole

Dark and damp
And things untold
Live down in
The hole

Between Friends
Brad Whetstine

Most of his stuff had been unboxed and put away. Chuck sat on the end of his bed and looked around his new room. It was slightly smaller than his old one. The walls had been freshly painted and were now bare, white and bright. His "Rocky" and Farrah Fawcett posters hung above his bed and helped remove some of the coarseness from the room. He squinted at the rest of the bare walls, wondering what would someday hang there. The Star Wars clock on his bureau was digital and its face flashed whenever a minute passed. That was when he noticed the time. The school bus would be pulling up to his old house about now. He was usually out waiting for it long before now but not today. Today the bus would pull up to Chuck's old house west of town and he wouldn't be out front waiting for it.

Keith would wonder where he was. Chuck and Keith shared the same seat on the bus. They were friends but not close friends. They didn't do stuff outside of school or go over to each other's house or even talk on the phone. Keith didn't have a phone and lived farther west of town than Chuck. Chuck never knew where. Keith was quiet and didn't talk much but he did listen. He was good at that. But now Chuck would only be able to talk to him during school and a guy could get into big time trouble over that, but he would risk it. They were friends.

Chuck looked around his room once more. The clock flashed the time again and he scooted off the bed to go downstairs. He liked the stairs. He liked the store, too. Chuck's parents had taken over Everest General Store after old man Huebner was no

longer able to run it. Forty-six years had been enough. The store was a two-story, flat roofed, brick and mortar structure that stood about a quarter mile from Everest Elementary where Chuck attended school. Chuck was living with his parents above the store. The old house west of town was pending sale. They would buy another house, eventually, but thought of living above the store would be to their advantage, for a while, until the business was on its feet.

Nineteen steep steps led Chuck downstairs to a storeroom in the back of the store. Every store has its storeroom, and the Nordsiek's was filled with bundles of brown paper bags the size of hay bales, along with weathered crates of empty pop bottles. Between them was a jagged path of filthy almond tile; it led to a side door braced with two medieval looking locks and a window the size of a dinner plate.

The bundles were heavy but easy to roll. And by rolling one bundle to the door, standing on it, nine-year-old Chuck was able to view the red brick school through the plate size window, an explorer surveying his trek. There it was: Everest Elementary, its height and distance only imaginable. How odd it would be walking to it!

He wondered, as explorers often do, what dilemmas he would encounter along the way—if he would have to summon his infinite reserve of courage to defend himself (and the town) from an apocalyptic caprice of nature such as a towering tsunami or a hellish earthquake during this hallmark event, or some other act of nature that would allow him to unleash his gritty John Wayne bravery.

There were immortal benefits to the heroics he pondered: Commemorative days would result from his bravery—holidays, parades and dolls! Yes, dolls! Hundreds—no, thousands of Chuck Nordsiek dolls manufactured every year, wished for by every kid

who ever had to ditch the bus to hoof it to school. Chuck's energy was pure kinetic; today was the day he would become an urban legend. He knew it. Teeth clenched, Chuck bowed and did a little Travolta spin and came out of it punching at the air. He looked right, then left, as if he were crossing a street. He didn't think anyone had seen him. He was blushing; he was sure of it....

Chest out, shoulders back, Chuck began his expedition out the door into and up the narrow road lined with grass so tall it was short, curled over by its own weight, an outlandish hairdo. His left hand stayed in the front pocket of his jeans, while his right clenched a brown lunch sack swelled fat by the sandwiches and graham crackers inside, his name written in black Sharpie marker across the front. The pack strapped to his back was charcoal black and was provisioned with books and papers. Up until today the weather in Everest had been windbreaker cool in the mornings and t-shirt warm in the afternoons. But this morning was neither; it was gray and Chuck smelled the forecasted rain while walking the road's shoulder, discovering an additional distance other than the one ahead of him, the small pebbles beneath his boots, a minute distance between the road and himself that responded to his steps the way iceberg lettuce does when chopped crisp and wet upon a block.

Some pebbles were more like sand. They stuck to his soles and recorded the tracks left in his wake. Others were larger, and shot out ahead of him with a gritty "pop," colliding with other pebbles of similar size, a volley of sediment that made the microcosmic villages of ants react as if under attack, scurrying along here and there, all helter-skelter, their militant behavior resembling microscopic particles of vacillating bacteria. He became his stillness, mulling their existence, the ants that were neither black

nor red and who, despite their size (they were very large) were unable to defend themselves or each other against his stride.

The slaughter was horrific. Hundreds lay dead within the curvaceous boundaries of his cookie-cutter tracks, their exoskeletons broken and crushed like kernels of corn between differential millstones. Chuck saw the soles of his prints crack and blister, hundreds of ants struggling for the air and light they craved. Seeing it all—having caused it all—Chuck stepped from the shoulder into the road....

The heat from the engine was hair-dryer hot; it was sudden, and Chuck felt the rush of it on the back of his neck. He turned to see the grill of the Chevy truck, its emblem trimmed in flaked polychrome. He inhaled his own reaction; the toxic mix of heat, antifreeze and oil became cotton in his throat. The sand between him and the asphalt was dry enough to pass for ice, and Chuck immediately stepped back into the tracks he should never have left, the weight of his pack shifting with his abruptness. Robbed of balance, he felt the pebbles already biting into his skin as his feet begged for friction, the one hand emerging from his pocket in time to collide with the asphalt.

The truck was past him now. His weight was on the sandwiches, the crackers; all were ruined. Foul voices filled his ears as if the men were talking directly into them, cursing him, ridiculing his reaction. On his knees, Chuck tried once more for a breath of purity but was overcome by asphyxiation as the accelerated emissions and dusty sediment left him coughing, his blood rushing through his head, feverish and hot. He sat back on his heels to examine his bloody hand skinned and pocked by bits of asphalt, the pin head indentation's filled with thoraxes, mandibles, antennas and gasters of a dozen or so ants. Adrenaline shook him. A pressure that had built behind his eyes made them open wide

and he clenched his jaw down tight trying to hold back the tears, but he couldn't. He knew there was nothing he could do about it: the truck, the lunch, his hands, the store—any of it. The void in his mind opened: that vacuum in time where thought was not allowed, only feeling, and it was tears he felt. He felt them on his cheeks. They left his face streaked with insecurity.

"Y'all right, man?" someone asked. Chuck's racing heart jumped a hurdle, shocked by the stranger's presence.

"Keith?" he thought, wiping his nose. "*Hey* man!" Chuck shouted, a bit too loudly, wiping as many tears from his face as he could before Keith saw them—if he hadn't already. "Hey—why ain't cha' on the bus?"

"Fuck it! I'm over it Chuck," Keith replied, crossing his arms.

"You've left the bus to walk, haven't ya? Cool—it'll be fun walking to—"

"To where...school? Fuck that, too. I'm over school." Keith, having felt the pack of Winstons in his jacket, decided now was as good a time as any for a smoke. "In fact," he continued, "I'm over this whole goddamn town." Keith made a motion with the pack as if he were about to bounce a ball. A brown filter budded from the foiled top. Keith withdrew its remaining length with his teeth.

Keith had Chuck's attention. He took a moment to examine him in the light of the dull gray morning.

Searching through the pockets of his jacket for a lighter, Keith was a boy of twelve who stood in the boots of a man. Chuck was impressed with the way Keith balanced the cigarette between his lips. Keith's jacket was thin and he wore it year round. Chuck had seen him without it only once, right before last summer break.

It had been a hot day—too hot. Chuck's nose would bleed if the day became too hot. And it was that day a bloody eruption freed him from music class, down to the restroom to clot in peace. Keith was there and Chuck had walked in on him, his jacket limp and vacant upon the sill of the sink that was streaked piss yellow with age. Keith was scooping handfuls of cool water from it a handful at a time. He wore a black Sammy Hagar tee shirt. Irregular bruises resembled islands within the straits of his arms, beaten to a blend that reminded Chuck of Holstein cattle: pale and black, some a little lighter and a little smaller down near his wrists, almost blue. The water he cupped in his hand rippled and beaded to a drip on the backs of his hands. He was trembling. Chuck watched him release the water; it cascaded down his upper arms and spiraled into the porcelain trough. He didn't seem to mind that Chuck had seen him with his jacket off. The day was so hot. Maybe the water, like Chuck's blood, felt too good to care.

But this day at the roadside was different. Keith stood before Chuck with his hands cupped around the cigarette's end, shielding it from the wind. He worked the wheel of his Bic to flint the last of its fluid to a flame; it took several attempts. He took a long drag from the cigarette; his cheeks sunk inward, like he was drinking a milkshake through a narrow straw. His hair was tousled and bushy. The wind from an adjacent field brushed it from his eyes from time to time. For the first time, Chuck noticed his eyes. They were turquoise blue and the lids around them were swollen red. They looked how his felt and then Chuck realized there was something terribly wrong. "Keith, what is it?"

Keith turned his head to the side and blew a plume of smoke so gray that it was barely visible.

"There's nothin' here for me Chuck, nothin'."

"How come?"

"Dammit, Chuck—don't ya' see? Look around! There's *nothin'* here!"

Chuck did as he was told. Fields, empty and stripped of value, cornered him and his friend.

"Don't leave, man, c'mon—my parents, they bought the store—you can get a job!"

Keith watched the ants.

"He sold it, Chuck...my guitar—amp and all. When I asked him 'why,' he said we needed the money. When I asked 'for what?' he flew into this rage—y'know—swingin' fists and throwin' shit. We *always* need the money. That's all I hear is how bad we need the goddamn money!"

Chuck, too, watched the ants.

"Why can't he go where the money is? It sure in hell ain't around here."

"Mom and Dad will hire you—they need help."

"Have ya' heard the song, Chuck, the one that goes *Watch out kid—they keep it all hid.* –Have ya'?" Keith knew he hadn't; Chuck didn't know why he'd asked. Looking at his bloody hand and tattered sack, Keith continued. "I've been stealin' off of old man Huebner forever now. I hated that son of a bitch. He couldn't keep his mouth shut around me—always tellin' me to 'get a haircut'—always givin' me shit about somethin'. He never liked me and I never liked him and I stole from him every chance I got. But now your folks have it and they're nice people—I mean they talk nice—ask you to 'come back,' like they really mean it. I can't steal from people like that and I sure as hell couldn't work for 'em. They're 'too' nice; they're hidin' somethin'." Chuck was silent.

He didn't know what to say. Keith sucked the remainder of his cigarette down to the filter, holding the smoke in his lungs while his thumb rolled the butt from between his fingers to the edge of his forefinger. He tilted his head back and blew the smoke over Chuck's head.

"Later, Chuck," Keith said, his thumb launching the butt onto the sandy shoulder. "I'm goin' where the money is."

And there, in the light of the dull gray morning, Chuck offered Keith a sandwich as the distance increased between them. He explained how it was a little squished. Keith shook his head, refused it, and resumed his stride. Chuck's heart began a cadence that accompanied the rain as it began to fall from the sky, slow and long like transparent straws. He took a sandwich from his bag, slipped it from its packaging and let it drop to the ground, hoping the ants wouldn't mind feasting in the rain. He stood and watched how they rushed it, scaled it—sieged it—how they strove to survive despite the rain, the attacks...the distance. They knew nothing of guitars....

No Envy
Eileen Booher

I'm really not envious at all
of what your wife has.
In fact, my heart goes out to her
thinking of what she had to put up with
all these years.

She deserves much more than a medal
for what she's been through
with you.

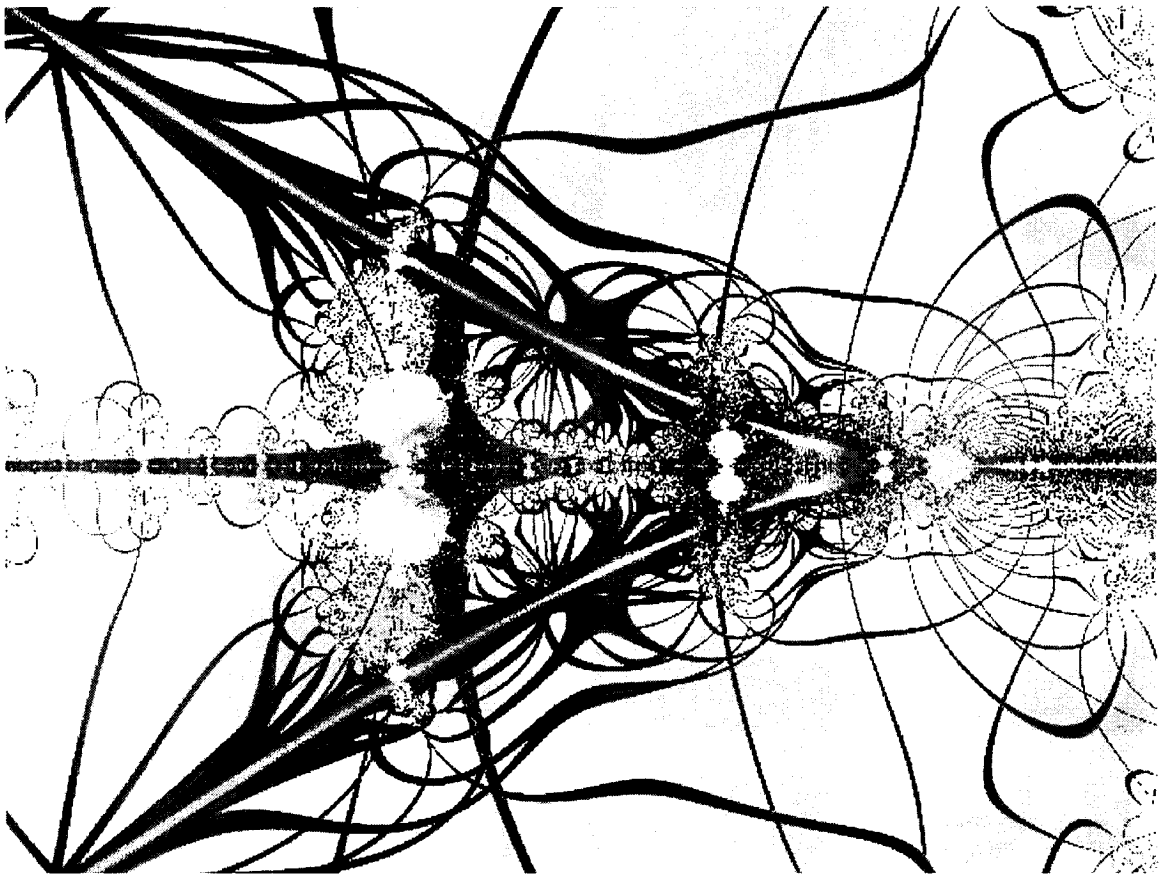
It's so much more than I would have ever
tolerated.
But that's what vows are for.
For better or for worse.

You've shown me both sides
of how men are
and I need to thank you for that.

While many things hurt
one can only say
"that's life."

What we sometimes call "love"
may actually be
just seeking thrills
like jumping out of a plane.

While most of the time
the outcome will be fine,
all it takes is once
to get hurt really bad.



Filagre
Shaun Watkins

Ode to the Sweet Dew
Jenn Willhite

Oh, sweet, sweet elixir of the beverage Gods,
You are sacred.
You keep me company,
Watching the late night give birth to day.
Addictive you are,
In a manic, yet seductive, sort of way.

I tried to leave,
To find someone new.
The closest thing I could find,
It wouldn't do, Dew.
The steaming, bitter java brews
They weren't the same, not like you.

Dressed in your green, yellow, and red,
You tempt me so.
The first thing I consume when I wake,
You are the goodnight toast before I go to bed.
The hiss of anticipation when you break free
Of your aluminum prison.

So versatile you are.
Warm or straight from the fridge,
On the rocks or not,
Glass, mug, or Dixie cup…there you are.
No argument when I take you on the road,
You love to travel, just as I.

I thought I would pay homage,
To the one that keeps me going.
You haven't received the thanks you deserve,
I will take this time to speak for all,
When I say, you are a marvel of modern brewery.
Bless you Dew, sweet elixir of the beverage family.

Old Friends
Steve Green

Old friends gone

Like a book

Read and shelved

Forgotten

Then dusted off

Reread and rediscovered

Better now and more cherished

For the good books

Are rare

Goodnight or Goodbye
Amanda Norris

These walls are thicker than I ever could dream,

And I can't make myself heard,

No matter how hard I scream.

Why can't you just try to communicate?

Someday you'll learn how.

Someday might be too late.

How do we tell time?

It's ticking.

Do we go by your watch or mine?

Here we are stuck at a standstill.

I'm not budging;

Lord knows you never will.

I don't listen; you don't hear,

And its coming,

The Judgement Day is oh so near.

I don't want to hang up the phone.

I won't let go.

I guess I'll just listen to the dialtone.

I'm probably speaking in tongues you don't understand.

It's okay,

Start at the top and read it over again.

Who's giving in?

Is it you or I?

Who's gonna decide;

Is it goodnight or goodbye?

In the Pit
Eileen Booher

I've been in the pits
for so long
it's starting to feel
like that's where I belong.
No one seems to notice
that I'm gone.

No one can hear my cries
for help.
The pit is so deep and dark,
just like Hell.
People pass by above me.
Don't they see me
or don't they care?

Everyone knew the pit was there
but no one bothered to cover it
or do anything to keep someone from falling in.

That silly girl,
she knew it was there.
Why did she let herself
get trapped in there?

To get the equipment
and organize the people,
it would take a major effort
to get her out of there.

We can't afford
to stop what we're doing
just to help her
get out of that trap.

She should have known better
than to get into that mess.
We'll just let her stay there
to figure it out for herself.

Café 7:50 PM

Brad Whetstine

I see you by chance,
Living, laughing,
Blissful and drinking,
Fragile among the others.

Your sips are as petite
As the street between us
Is slim…a small narrow obstacle
Rich and constricted—always under construction,
An infinite dichotomy.

A border here,
A barrier there.

I see you now as I've seen you before,
Having met you with a smile.
An informal gesture,
One you'll never hear.

If, by chance, the street were crossed,
The problem would be one of glass,
A surface wide and thin..
One more obstacle even more infinite.

Nothing like the glass I hold,
Transparent but yielding.

Empty and patient…elated among the others.

A border here,
A barrier there.

I Could Fall in Love
Eileen Booher

I could fall in love with words,
the ones that are quite unique,
and perhaps I have a time or two.
Just contemplating the meaning,
and dissecting the phrases,
rearranging them in numerous
various ways.
The words that are seldom heard anymore,
like ingenuity
and promiscuity.
Perhaps it was the words
that I fell in love with
instead of the person.
Believing what they said
Because I wanted to
letting them touch a part of my heart
not knowing how they would tear it apart.

Down the Drain
Eileen Booher

Everyone stands
looking in awe
as the lives slip down the drain.

Caught in despair
of the merciless trap
lacking someone to care.

How can you measure
the worth of a life?
Compared to what…..?
the price of a house?
the price of a car?
Which one is more valuable, by far?

Leave the Door Open

Joe Garcia

I stand outside Heaven's gate
And I'll wait until the end of time
Just leave the door open,
just a little open
And I'll be just fine.

I can be your friend,
I can be anything and everything
that you want me to be.
Just leave the door open,
just a little open.
And I'll be fine.

We could have something great
And I can wait
Until the end of time.
Just leave the door open,
just a little open.
And I'll be fine.

If you gave us a chance,
I'd give you a fairy tale romance
And hopefully, a storybook ending.
Just leave the door open,
just a little open.
And I'll be fine.

Non-Poetry
Amanda Norris

This isn't poetry;

I'm crying ink.

This isn't anything

That requires you to think.

This isn't poetry;

That's not what it's about.

This isn't poetry;

Don't try to figure it out.

Burnt by Cupid
Amanda Norris

Heartache, Cupid burned me.

His lust-soaked voice I did trust.

My sacred boy, with arrow in hand,

Laughs, then flickers away

As I bleed it out.

Remembering his sugary kisses

And honey promises,

Like blood-drenched candy on my tongue.

Standing Timber
Brad Whetstine

The day was early and cool but I still broke a sweat. I leaned against my pitchfork inside the barn. Tacked to the wall was a black and white photo, faded and slightly curled with age. It was taken when Dad and Uncle Bobby were young, back when they were skinny and wrinkle free, back when their ears stuck out far from their burred haircuts. Neither smiled. Both of them stood, their double-barreled shotguns at their feet. Rabbits hung limp and dead from their hands and from their belts. Uncle Bobby's side of the picture had more than Dad's. Dad was a known bragger when it came to his marksmanship so I asked him why the picture in the barn showed Uncle Bobby with more rabbits. "They're all mine, actually," he explained, grinning at the ground. "Bob was just helpin' me hold 'em all."

Grinning, reminiscing how Dad had made me laugh that time, I resumed my work in the stalls where the mud and shit was ankle deep. That was when Dad ambushed me from behind a cattle feeder. He had a pitchfork and the next thing I knew the end of the handle was against my sternum. His face was sluggish from sleep and rough with whiskers. He had caught me off guard and his jab with the handle knocked me backwards. My feet were unable to move like they should; the suction of the manure I stood in was too strong. When I did fall I didn't fall far. I tried to use my pitchfork to regain my balance but it was the board fence of the stall behind me that kept me on my feet. I felt what I knew was a rusty nail puncturing my back. He was mad. I had stayed out too late the night before with a girl Mom and Dad didn't approve of. Dad stood before me now to confront me about it. He glared at me. His words were clear and defined and

he used the handle of his fork to jab each syllable into my sternum. "I am *not* feedin' another mouth in this family--do ya hear! –Your mother and me don't wanna be grandparents *yet* –ya understand?" His breath was rank with coffee and sausage. The speech ended with a final jab from the handle. He expected me to say something and we stared into each other's eyes before the blood drained from my face and left it cold. I looked to the ground for an answer. He turned and left to clean the stalls in one of the other barns.

I wanted to do so much. I wanted to charge him from behind—to see the expression on his face when he turned and realized it. I wanted to take a step forward but felt my foot leave the boot. I wanted to yell at him, remind him that he was an old bastard who could have broken my damn chest. But my throat was dry and I knew that words were useless, anyway. I was stuck. I looked for Dad. He was gone. All I saw was the grazing cattle with their tails and ears swishing and twitching. I felt woozy and my head began to spin; my eyes flattened to slits beneath the weight of their lids. I released the fork I had been using and it fell away from me in slow motion. I leaned forward and wretched up my breakfast. Wiping my mouth clean with the sleeve of my shirt, I picked up the fork and mixed the sickness into the mud and shit then pitched it out of the stall.

The next morning I woke to Dad's truck sputtering into a low repetitious idle. I dressed and left my room upstairs for the kitchen downstairs. Mom was always the first one up in the morning but she didn't stay up for long, just long enough to fix us a breakfast sandwich and to pack our lunch. Mom stood there in one of her flannel nightgowns. Her face was the color of paste. The ribbing from her thickest Chenille

bedspread left its imprint on the left side of her cheek and disappeared into the tangled mess of her hair.

"Kevin hon, Dad's waitin', put on your coveralls, it's twenty-seven out. There's an egg sandwich on the counter for ya and some milk in the fridge—try drinkin' some—hurry up! I'm goin' back to bed." Mom always slept best after we had left for work.

The sandwich lay on a napkin on the counter and I picked it up and used the book I had brought down with me as a plate. I stepped out onto the screened-in porch where the boots were kept. Two pair out of seven were mine.

Our dog Rascal was a black Lab. He rushed the porch barking and jumping high into the air, twisting and wiggling the way dolphins do at water shows. I took a bite out of the sandwich and held the rest in my mouth to lace my boots. Rascal carried on and on, barking and jumping and twisting and barking until it was annoying. I opened the porch door and he stood on his back legs. I rolled the sandwich into a ball and threw it to him. He cocked his head to the side and studied it as it came towards him. He caught it and more or less inhaled it through his mouth. That made him quiet and still. Dad sat in the front seat of a 1962 Ford grain truck. He was hunched over the steering wheel sipping coffee and staring hard into the windshield. The cap he wore was pulled down snug and levelheaded—a serious pitcher with a go-to-hell-fastball.

Cans filled with fuel and lubricants, chainsaws, axes and splitting mauls were in the truck's bed. There was two of everything. A wooden box with rope handles was among the selected tools. It was a crate for carrying and held wedges and a few odd hand tools. A large wheelbarrow lay upside down. We would be cutting timber today.

The bed of the Ford shared the same dimensions as a cord of wood. Metal racks on three sides extended above the cab about a foot. The end was left open in back. The driver's side rack had a piece of log chain that had at one time served a purpose but no longer did. A bolt through one of the pencil-thick links with a large washer welded on each end resembled a small barbell. It behaved as a clapper within a bell, swinging and clanging against the truck rack even on the smoothest terrain. Over the years its behavior had engraved an arch into the rack's side—past the paint, into the metal that was now rusted with age.

I opened the door of the idling Ford. "Winter's here, ain't it?" Dad said, giving me his ten-second morning once over. I tossed my book onto the seat. He frowned at it. I didn't see him, but I knew he did. Ignoring his stare, I stepped up into the cab then settled into my seat that was brittle and patched with duct tape. "I believe so," I said. Rags, receipts, an old hat and bits and pieces of plastic along with some other junk littered the floorboard. I picked through it for a pair of gloves. I always forgot my gloves. It was a bad habit. He shifted the truck into its lowest gear and it lurched forward with the enthusiasm of a Sherman tank.

Dad drove through the feedlot past the barns and through the pasture. Everything that was familiar began to fade as we approached the standing timber. Dad slowed the truck then turned and crept down the road we had cut earlier in the year, the road that led to the Beech tree that had once stood at the foot of the ridge. Rascal galloped along side us.

The road only went so far. It became more congested the farther we traveled. A path began at the end of the road. It was short and narrow and led to the old Beech that

had once stood crowned with a frenzy of branches for many years. I helped Dad get the wheelbarrow down out of the truck. He loaded it with the box of wedges and began to push it down the path. I carried the axes and the mauls and followed close behind. A branch that had easily bent from his path recoiled into mine. Its force cut the air with a slight whistle before its budded tip struck the corner of my mouth. The shock made me suck in air and back up a couple of steps. I froze and Dad kept walking. I was following too close. Blindness scared the hell out of me so I kept my head down the rest of way, nursing the welt with my tongue. It tasted warm and salty and reminded me of ketchup on hash browns, my favorite food.

Earlier in the week Dad had cut the tree down and sawed it into stove long lengths. Today would be a day of splitting and gathering. We began our work at the crown end of the Beech and worked our way to where it was cut from the stump. The work was slow as we loaded and wheeled tree limbs back through the narrow path, back to where the truck was parked waiting to be filled. Three, four hours later the pieces became bigger and were in need of splitting. The small pieces split with little difficulty. The medium pieces were a little tougher and whenever my muscles began to twitch and spasm I piled the billets into the wheelbarrow and pushed them up the path to the truck.

We took a couple of breaks. Break time came whenever Dad waved his hand in front of his face as if a fly was buzzing it. A fragment of timber lay close by and we used it to sit on. Dad went to the truck and returned with the cooler Mom had packed for us in one hand. In the other hand was the rifle he kept under the truck seat. He propped it against a sapling with its breech open; it was not loaded. I sat down and opened a cola from the cooler. Dad shook his coffee thermos with the same deliberation as a vandal

would a can of Krylon. I proceeded to talk of Tom Edison. The book I had brought along was about him. I'd been reading it for a while now and longed to share its facts with someone.

"I-I've been readin' this book about the guy who invented the light bulb and do ya know he accumulated 1,200 patents durin' his lifetime?"

"1,200...is that right?" Dad said, talking into his coffee cup.

"Yeah, and he did a bunch of other stuff too—like one time, his mom got really sick and needed an operation in the middle of the night, so he took this huge mirror off the wall—kinda' like the one hangin' in the livin' room—and got every oil lamp in the house and lined them all up in front of it and it lit the whole room up so the doctor could operate and save his mom's life--ain't that somethin'?"

"You leave that mirror on the wall," he said, lips pursed, with one bushy eyebrow arched for emphasis.

"--I know," I said, "I wasn't goin' to try it 'cause I seen it done in a movie already...besides, we ain't got but one oil lamp."

"You leave that alone, too. Drink your pop; it's getting' hot, and you're not wastin' it--they cost too damn much."

Halfway through my soda he tossed the rest of his coffee from its cup out onto a gnarled skeleton of a spicebush and said, "Let's get it."

Splitting wood is the kind of work that allows you to think outside of the task at hand. As the bigger pieces became smaller and smaller with each swing of the axe I thought back to a time when I was eight or nine....

Uncle Bobby and Aunt Jen's house was built on a knoll of property a couple miles from our own. If the weather were nice Mom and I would ride out with Dad to visit them. They had two kids, John and Amanda. Other kids were there as well, neighbor kids. We played hide and seek or went arrowhead hunting if the fields had been recently tilled. Mom and Aunt Jen drank coffee inside at the kitchen table while Dad and Uncle Bobby drank beer outside at the picnic table. Back then Stroh's beer was drunk from gold-yellow cans printed with silver lettering. When the cans were crushed down flat, they resembled fried eggs. In the distance were several of the aluminum eggs tacked to trees. They served as targets and after a few beers Dad and his brother would use them for practice.

Dad and my Uncle were both crack shots. Years of Sundays at the picnic table making beer cans into targets made marksmen out of them. It was old hat to them, but to us kids, the suspense mounted with every shot. Dad's shots were quick and accurate. His finger seemed to trip the trigger the minute he raised the rifle to his shoulder. Uncle Bobby took a little longer. His aim was good, but his eyes weren't. I stood at the side with the rest of the kids and we all watched him. I watched how his breathing ceased and how he became stoic, not moving at all. I held my breath along with him. I scanned every inch of him, longing to discover the origins of the nerves and muscles that would pull the trigger. His silence was demanding, one that resulted in a spooky anxiety--a drowning man who has been under water too, too long. But just when I felt the urge to blink, swallow, or breathe, the Winchester's hammer would snap forward as quick as a mousetrap springs on its prey. Whenever the match came to a draw, Dad gave us kids a handful of pennies and we Scotch taped them to scraps of wood. Dad shot the centers out

of most of them from an impressive distance. He then gave them to the little girls who threaded twine through them and wore them as jewelry. That was the only time he took careful aim.

"Hey! –Kevin!"

I looked around to see Dad waving the imaginary fly from his face. It was lunchtime. We took out places on the log. We finished eating. I opened the Edison book to the black and white photographs to show Dad the fancy woodwork of Edison's floor model phonographs. Farmers often do extra work for extra money and Dad had done some cabinetwork in past winters. I thought he would enjoy the pictures.

"Look at this Dad—check out the woodwork on those record player cabinets." He had to rise from his seat a little to reach it, looked at it, and was just about ready to say something when he turned his head to the left so quick it made me jump. "Did you hear somethin'?" he whispered, his head frozen in the direction we faced. I shook my head no. "Huh?" he snapped persistently—all cross and irritated. He shook the book at me in a way that said *Do something with this damn thing* so I took the damn thing from him. I hated it when he referred to anything as "something." Something could mean anything; therefore, anything could happen. Whatever he'd heard was in the woods with us. I think everyone is afraid of what they cannot see.

Dad leaned back and groped for a shell in his pants pocket. He reached out for the rifle. His elbow cracked when his arm straightened. He laid the rifle across his knees and inserted the shell into the open breech and snapped it shut. He stared into the woods as he had the windshield of the truck earlier that morning. Rascal cowed as he emerged from the brush as the "something" that had spooked us. "Ya 'bout got it—didn't ya dog?"

he said, leaning the rifle against the tree. The breech was closed and loaded. Dad chuckled silently and shook his head at Rascal between the final sips of his remaining coffee.

As the day wore on the blocks of Beech increased in size. The trunk measured four feet in diameter and required more effort and concentration to reduce to stove wood. The block before me had a few knots where limbs had once grown. I took a swing at it and the axe bounced from its surface as if I had struck a rubber tire. My axe was too light. I picked up Dad's. His was heavier and had a longer handle, a greater advantage and a greater leverage. Taking two steps back to compensate for its length, I took a practice swing for the same reason golfers do, then breathed deep. I wasn't putting my whole back into it either. That was part of it. I raised the axe and when the blade was high above me, my heels left the ground and I stood on tiptoe for a split second before my top hand slid down and met the bottom one at the end of the handle. Despite my efforts, the axe, again, bounced from its target. I took a wedge from the box and proceeded to drive it into the block with little success. I was getting tired. Frustrated, I shed a layer of clothing and picked up the splitting maul with my right hand, using the maul's flat face to start the wedge I held in my left hand. Tap one, tap two—in! The wedge stood upright on its blade. It looked like a magic trick. I stepped back and started swinging the maul with all I had until the wedge disappeared into the block that was supposed to be splitting and popping but had yet to do so. I stepped back to look at it. I chose another wedge from the box, one to drive beside the other.

Dad bawled, "Is that all the better you can do? How many damn times have I showed ya howta' do this—how many more times am I gonna hafta' show ya?"

"I was just getting start—"

"Out of the way—move!"

He took the wedge and maul from me, then exchanged the narrow wedge I had chosen for a wider on. Turning the block on its side, I saw how the bark of its length was jagged and lacerated where it had been splitting all along, only silently. He put the wedge here. Three strikes from the maul sent the block popping and cracking until one side rolled away from the other like a divided peach, its grain filling the forest with its scent. Dad then chose his axe and began splitting the halves into billets, starting at one end and ending at the other. When finished, he turned to me, breathing hard. His cheeks were flushed red and he used his forefinger to tap out every syllable of "*That's* how you do *that* . . ." upon my chest before bending down to collect the remaining wood. As he bent over before me I thought, just for a second, how easily I could rid the world of this man. I could do it. I had split all the wood around me, hadn't I? Look at what I was capable of doing! I thought of the time I'd seen a pumpkin dropped from a speeding car at Halloween. I remembered how it exploded, how the pulp shot out far in one direction, how the three pieces it broke into were cup-shaped and how they rocked on the pavement afterwards. The idea was with me. My axe was to my right and within reach. The rifle was to my left; its breech was closed and loaded. Accidents involving firearms happen every day. I looked at it, waited for it to fall over and discharge. Nothing happened; it wasn't going to. The axe handle that filled the vacancy of my palm was cool to the touch. I gripped it tight, picking it high above the leaves so as not to rustle them. My hand was sweaty, the handle was slick and I felt at one time that it would slide from my grip onto the leaves and foil my plan. I gripped it tighter. I blinked the sweat from my eyes. I

could see the axe was mine and not Dad's like I had thought. It was *so* heavy. *Could I do this . . .?* I asked myself. I thought about the Beech and how some pieces didn't split as well as others. It was then he stood up straight and quick with the wood in his arms. His head would have hit my chin if I had not backed up a step. I leaned against my axe as if it were a cane and breathed easy as he walked away.

All was quiet during the drive home—too quiet. Something was missing, not quite right. I thought about it hard. When the Ford rolled into the barn lot I realized the clanging and banging of the bolt and the chain against the truck's side was absent. I looked at where it had been. It was gone. All was left was a shiny spot above the rusted arc it had worn into the metal rack. I looked for it later and found it. I didn't tell Dad. It was mine.

The next morning I was up before Mom. I packed some clothes, a couple books and the chain with its bolt through its end. I wrote a letter. The letter was a hard one to write. I tried to explain my leaving in a way they might understand. Dad would miss my help. Mom would miss me for other reasons. Leaving was much like the Beech I had spent yesterday splitting. Some pieces were tougher to divide than others—but it could be done. The days that Dad had made me laugh were as faded and gray as the picture tacked to the barn wall. And while my fear of him increased over the years, in the end, it was I who had become my worst fear. If it were true how people were afraid of what they could not see then I could not see myself going through life as a bolt fastened to the end of a chain. I could not see myself behaving as a clapper in a bell, swinging and clanging into the side of a truck day after day only to break from stress when driven too far.

Downstairs all was dark. I stepped into the hallway, took my coveralls off the hook and stuffed them into my bag. I opened the door to the fridge. The light came on. I grabbed a package of hotdogs and sliced them open with a knife. I then opened a quart of milk and finished it off. There wasn't much left. I left the empty carton on the counter so Mom would see it. I laid the letter on the counter in the spot where my morning sandwich usually lay.

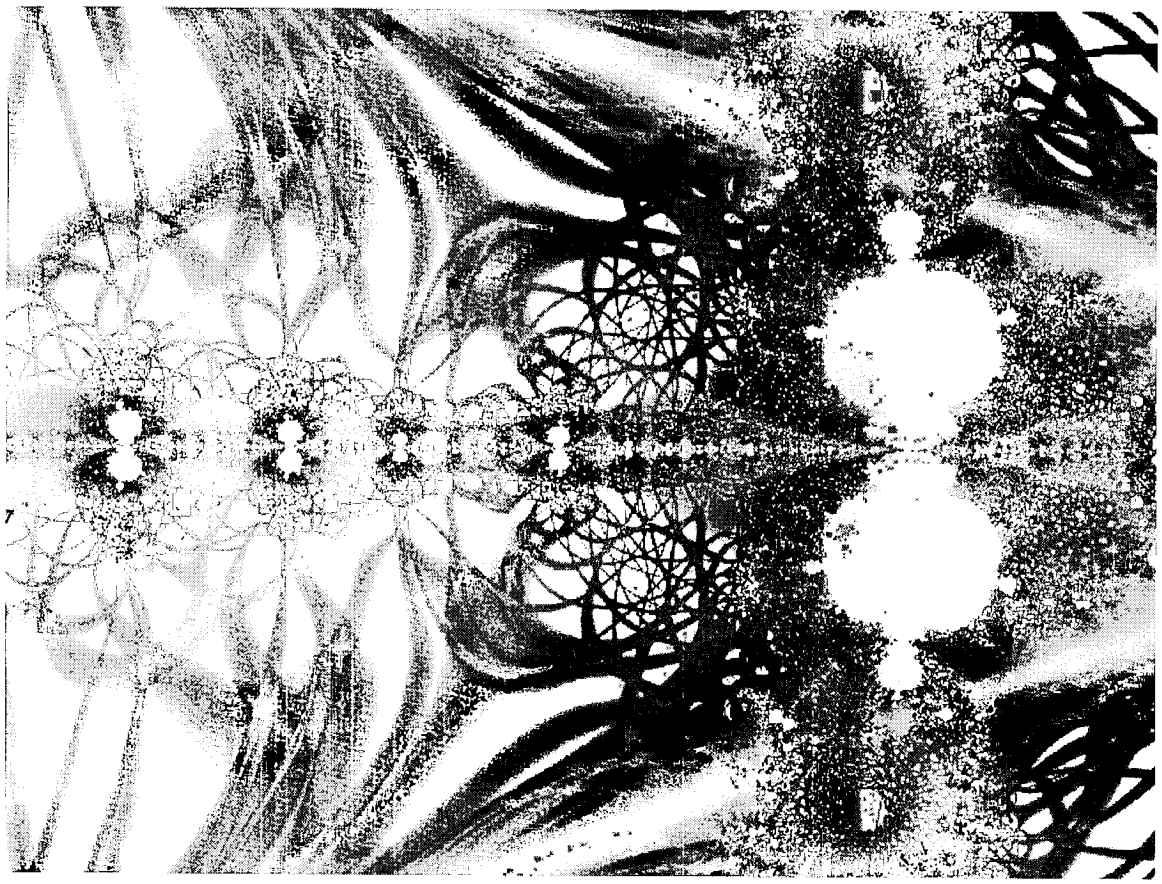
Outside Rascal lay coiled on a rug with his head on his haunches. He unwound quickly and began to wiggle and twist and I immediately dumped the hotdogs—package and all—onto the porch. I slipped my boots on and laced them up quickly. I stood up. It felt good. Today my feet were able to move like they should. I was no longer stuck. I slung the strap of my bag over my shoulder and my heart pounded hard when I pushed the porch door open. I locked Rascal in behind me and walked fast across a field to the road. The night was pitch black, but I could still see my breath. Pulling on my gloves I thought of someplace warm. I walked with resolve and made good time. Everything that was familiar began to fade. The farm was behind me, but I swore I could hear Rascal whining and scratching at the porch door. I quickened my pace and didn't look back.

Just Walk Away
Steve Green

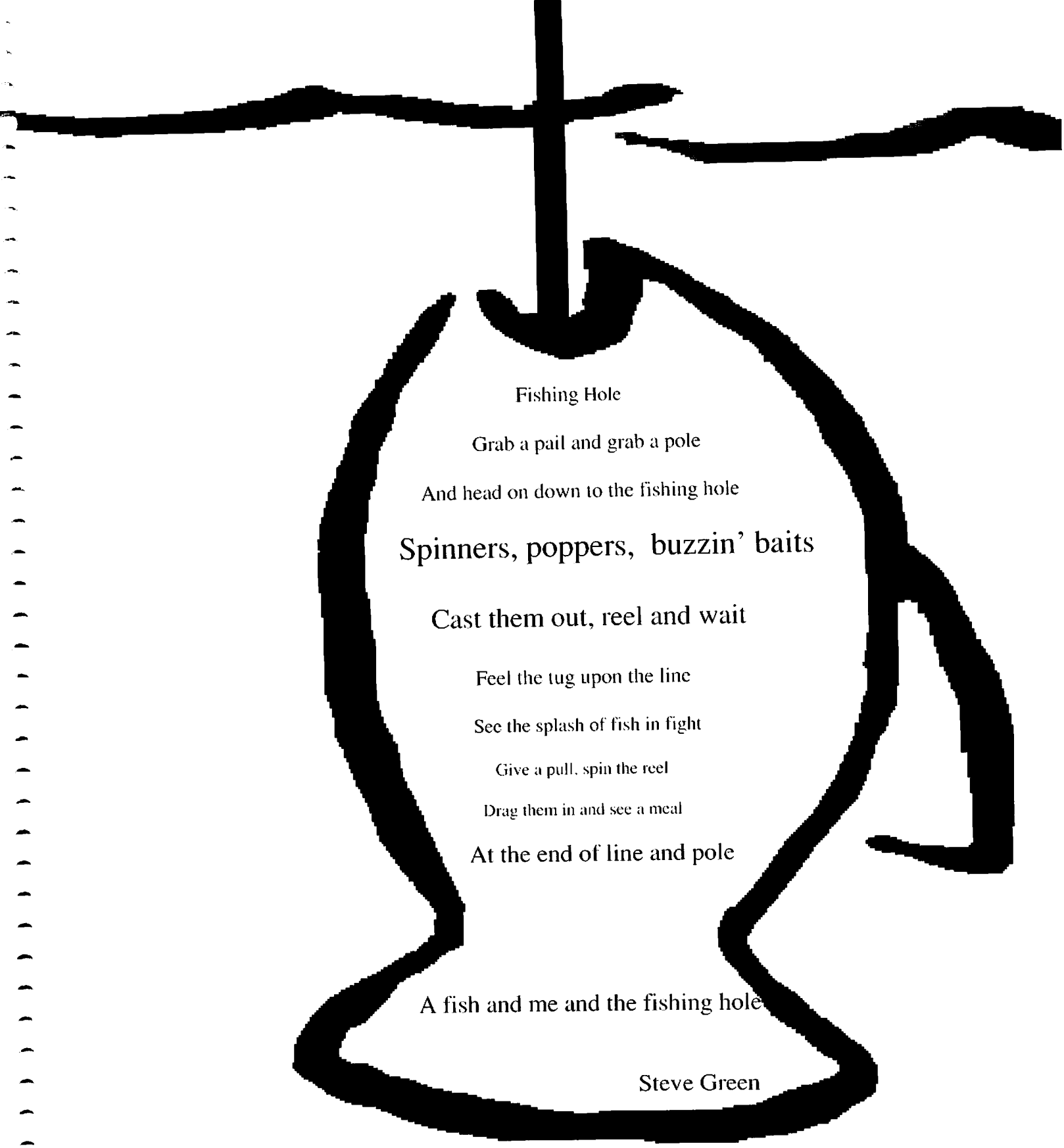
Watching and waiting and wanting my fall,
So many rules and so much control,
Give me some time to watch your parade,
Of mistakes and failures and foolhardy ways.

I'm locking the doors now and turning away,
This 9-to-5 lifestyle is getting too gray,
It's making me bitter and callous and old,
So I'm stepping aside going out of the fold.

Out through the gates and into the lot,
I drive off in my car and let out a shout,
I'm over it now and I've just got to say,
It's marvelous sometimes to just walk away.



Networking
Shaun Watkins



Fishing Hole

Grab a pail and grab a pole

And head on down to the fishing hole

Spinners, poppers, buzzin' baits

Cast them out, reel and wait

Feel the tug upon the line

See the splash of fish in fight

Give a pull, spin the reel

Drag them in and see a meal

At the end of line and pole

A fish and me and the fishing hole

Steve Green

Sevens Among Nines
Brad Whetstine

Night.

CORONA hums against the window,
A cold obsidian.
Sun yellow,
Cursive and warm,
Humming and inviting.
Empty bottles, rinds of lime. A buck or two.
Coats go on. Compliments all around.
Reminders to forget, "Tell so and so..."
And pretend they will.
Empty glasses, empty stools, empty hearts, full of longing—
Always for rent—always left behind remain behind.

He holds the door for the women, relishes the one's fragrance as she passes.
Door shut, music fades, the selection one of coincidence. Rhythm is the mood.
Outside, a small hug—harmless—common...among friends....
He can feel everything about her through the leather of her jacket.
The street lamp illuminates her: spotlight on the nightlife.
She becomes the one he needs her to be.
Fantastic she is, the one who belongs to the other.
He too belongs to another. The two of the four stand facing this, knowing this,
Kings and queens on black and white squares.

Her hands rest on his shoulders, she speaks to him through her eyes, the way of saints.
Wisps of steam, rapid and confused, illustrate her breathing.
Unseen and unheard to the adjacent conversation at the edge of the street.
Their talk is verbal. Trash set out at the curb.

All has been said. Script read.

Bills of play riddle the aisles.

He turns away from her with the grace of a knight, leaving her in his vacuum.

She holds out her hand, her fingertips brush the energy of his existence.

How wrong it is; how right it could be....

Between them pass numbers of Arabic scrawled on a matchbook.

Hope she can tell my "sevens" from my "nines...."

"—Hey buddy...gotta light?"

Suspicion unfolds; deception is recognized; confrontation is read

By the light of a flaming match....

Two angry kings step from the street into the alley. Not far...within shadows.

The queens wait. One embraces herself. The other smokes.

Brows knit. Concerned. Schoolgirls up against a difficult problem.

No talk, no compromise—negotiation is *passé*.

Alcohol brings out the truth in so many.

Between towers of brick and mortar,

Fists of insecurity remove skin and teeth.

"—Get over it!"

"—I'm over it."

"—Go home."

"—Go to hell!"

Point made.

Stalemate.

No cross bar motel tonight.

The women drive their own away.

All that could be said has been said.

All that could be done has been done.

All consumed, nothing changed.

All leave with whom they came.

All leave feeling the same.

Another night, nothing right.

Sevens among nines....

Our Losses

Walter Kenanas

Isaac and Ishmael came together
To mourn their father's death
Only to be separated by their children

Siddhartha awoke from the dream
To show us enlightenment
Only to be placed into a coma

Christ died on a cross
Then arose from the dead
Only to be killed again

Mohammed listened to the words of God
And wrote them for all to read
Only to lose his sight

Us, Them, Ours, Theirs
Distinctions that distance

Crusade, Jihad, Inquisition, Holocaust
Acts that form nightmares

Infidel, Heretic, Faggot, Wetback
Words that poison

Fundamentalism, Fanaticism, Separatism
Beliefs that blind

Care, Hope, Love, Joy
Things that heal

My Distant Sun

Amanda Norris

One lonely night I sat staring into the midnight sky,
When a certain star caught my eye.
It was more radiant than I ever imagined a star could be.
This may sound foolish, but it seemed to glimmer
Only for me
Every night thereafter I was drawn back to visit my distant sun,
And told it thoughts I never thought I'd tell anyone.
I would ask it questions, and
It sparkled and flickered as if it could understand.
One fateful night, as I stared into the twilight, to watch my star glisten
It tried to tell me it was scared
But, to it's unearthly voice my ears weren't trained to listen.
As I watched my celestial body began to fall from the vault of heaven
Toward the ground below.
The grief I felt to see this none could ever know.
I had to begin searching for it
Though I didn't know how.
I loved it so dearly, I couldn't let it go now.
I started my journey, I didn't care how far.
Foolish girl, let herself fall in love with a star.
After traveling for some time,
I stumbled upon this exquisite star of mine,
And vowed that I would always keep it safe.
For this I had to find the perfect place.
I thought of my heart but remembered it had long since been cracked,
And I would lose this heavenly body again never to get it back.
With a glint and a glimmer it told me that is where it wanted to be.
Not to leave me again it had to swear,
And when I opened my heart I realized
It had always been there.

Hail! All Ye Gather: An Essay
Keith Persley

Take yourself back to a time when love abounded in every nook and cranny of Europe. Lords and Ladies courted each other with zeal. Love poems were recited in every parlor and on every corner. Minstrels wandered the streets playing their songs for all to hear. This was the time of the Renaissance, a time of love and poetic scholars. The Renaissance was a multifaceted, comprehensive movement with a spirit of wide-ranging, heightened illumination that everyone wanted to communicate to each other. This spirit gave unity and togetherness to the Renaissance, especially to poets and their poetry.

The Italian poetic dialect that had been instituted by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio was reduced by the return of Latin in the late 15th century. The Renaissance is generally known to be the time period dating between 1485 and 1603. It began feverishly in Italy and moved through Europe, settling mainly in England and France. Humanistic writers, philosophers, and scholars began to bring established fonts of inspiration, matters of language, literary style, moral instruction, and the relationship of humanity to God back to the realms of poetic humankind. Poets such as Luigi Pulci, who wrote the infamous "Morgante" (a story/poem of knights and paladins with a comic spin), wrote in a classical style with a new twist. Other Renaissance styles began to emerge as great new methods of writing.

The poetic forms (sonnets, couplets, villanelles) had not changed; but fresh styles were introduced, including the pastoral romance, classical tragedy, and comedy, all of which brought out the linguistic purism of the Renaissance. Renaissance poetry has an aesthetic feel to it. Extremely long epics and sagas were put by the wayside for shorter,

more artistic, and visual writings. An individual cannot visualize Dante's "Inferno" because of its length, but can a 36-line sonnet. The townsfolk would gather for these poetry readings and recitals, but if the Renaissance was about anything, it was about love.

The main subject for Renaissance poetry was the love poem. In fact, the Italian sonnet was a love story set in a poem and recited everywhere. The troubadour was the performer of the art of poetry and the original "starving artist." Mostly poor, with only one set of decent clothing, they wrote and recited love poetry anywhere they were allowed. Those who were also minstrels would do the same, except with the added attraction of music and song. Many troubadours were street performers and made their livings this way. Cyrano de Bergerac is a fictional character, but is probably the most famous troubadour of all time. There were no radios or televisions during the Renaissance, so these artists would stand on pedestals in the center of town and recite the news of the day. Not all troubadours composed poetry and not all composers were troubadours, although almost everyone, men and women alike, dreamed of either writing or reciting poetry. Renaissance poetry was a widely accepted art form, and many people played a part in its genius.

Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder (1503-1542), a diplomat and a scholar introduced the sonnet to England in the poetry court of King Henry VIII. Although he had a few manuscripts floating around, Wyatt himself was never published in his lifetime. As a poet of his social class (he was cousin to Queen Anne Boelyn), he was interested only in the approval of the sophisticated Lords and Ladies of Henry's court. Henry's court poets created an art form that one man would take to its highest peak. William Shakespeare is probably the most famous playwright the world has ever known, but may be considered a

mastermind because of his poetry. He created his very own style, and transformed it from a simple style to a more complicated form. The English sonnet, or Shakespearean sonnet, was his creation. Shakespeare rearranged the traditional Italian sonnet, which has an 8-line verse followed by a 6-line concluding verse, to three, 3-lined verses culminating in a couplet. He wrote over five hundred of these type sonnets in his lifetime and would recite many of them in his theater as an "opening act" for his plays. Today Shakespeare is known as a playwright, but his genius as a poet cannot be ignored.

Another surprising fact about the Renaissance is that King Henry VIII also wrote poetry and loved poetry, as did his daughter, the future Queen Elizabeth I. Her most famous works were her personal journals, which were written in poetic verse. It should not be so surprising that she was an accomplished poet, however. Elizabeth's tutors were Henry's court poets and she was born with a talent that was embedded in her soul and flowed through her veins.

What might be most surprising to those both familiar and unfamiliar with the Renaissance is the fact that Michelangelo, the famous sculptor and painter, was also a poet. It is a little known fact that he wrote many poems, mostly sonnets, while he was working on other projects. Unlike most romantic sonnets, however, his sonnets dealt mostly with the horrors of love. In his novel, *The Renaissance*, Walter Pater explains that "people have often spoken of these poems as if they were a mere cry of distress, a lover's complaint." Modern day science diagnoses Michelangelo as a manic-depressive, however, his art, as well as his poetry, remains genius.

The Renaissance was immersed in poetry and love. The times gave people of all social classes something in common and something to strive toward. Renaissance poetry

transcended all boundaries of country and class. Although the era wasn't perfect, and was often filled with turmoil and strife, it had its poetry which, even in the most difficult of times, was able to transcend the conflict and unrest in which it was born.

If You Want

Brad Whetstine

For Anne

You can try to catch me

But don't.

You'll never be free if you do.

So don't.

Just give me a call,

If you want.

Sun or Moon

Or maybe both. Just be

Sure your hair is up…

If you do,

If you want….

Easily

Eileen Booher

How easily we are led astray
by those who are supposed to protect,
by those who are supposed to be concerned
about our welfare,
about our lives.

Trusting others to care about
what happens to us as individuals.
It's hard to tell what side a person is on.

For me or against me
is the way I see it.
Helping or hurting
is the way to determine
a dividing line.

I only need one set of eyes
looking down on me.
Only one judging me.
All others can step aside.

Biographical Notes

Eileen Booher: is a non-traditional student who will be a senior this fall. She received her A.G.S. in December 2001 and is currently working on a minor in Sociology. Her daughter, Jeanette, will be graduating from St. Bartholomew this year and is also planning to attend IUPU Columbus. Eileen has been writing poetry for the last four years, and these are her first poems to be published.

Alex Clark: On the 20-year college plan, Alex is well on her way to actually finishing this time. She's an English major trapped in the body of ... an English Major. She would like to win the lottery some day just to prove that money wouldn't change her.

Joseph Gonzales Garcia: The writer known as Joe Garcia was born Joseph G. Garcia in the little village of Batesville, Indiana. Formerly an English/Creative writing double major, he has switched to Informatics. He has attended college since the dawn of time (fifth year student with two years left...nonmedical degree) starting at Purdue University then gracing this campus with his presence on his way toward (hopefully) attending IU-Bloomington. Poetry is his secondary work, as he primarily prefers to work on prose and is currently on a variety of projects in that area.

Steve Green: is 45, married, and the father of two wonderful kids (Emily and Ben), Steve likes reading, playing guitar, writing, and going to the movies. He is working on his BS in General Studies and enjoys going to school because it keeps him from getting stale.

Amanda Norris: is a freshman at IUPUC and in her first semester of college, Amanda is a Psychology major. She graduated from Franklin Community High School and currently resides in Franklin. She has been writing poetry since the age of 12, mainly as a source to express her emotions. She has never published, or attempted to publish, any of her work until now.

Keith Persley: is a 33-year-old sophomore majoring in Psychology. He loves writing, whether it is a short story, a school paper or a poem. His contributions mark his debut as an author in Literalines.

Shaun Watkins: is a senior at IUPUC. He is interested in psychology and philosophy. In his spare time he likes to read, play euchre, and tell jokes. As well as being an aspiring artist, Shaun continues to contribute his technical expertise in the production of Literalines.

Brad Whetstine: is a sophomore currently living out of his suitcase. His short story, "Standing Timber," is the winner of the 2002 Mary Louise Rae Short Story Award.

Jenn Willhite: is a senior majoring in English and Comparative Literature and a veteran Writing Center tutor, Jenn is a loyal contributor to *Literalines* and assists with its production every spring. She resides in Columbus with husband, Brad, and cat, Gabriel. Aside from the ability to quote Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* start to finish, she is *always* writing, and when her pen is not in motion, her nose is in a book. Her favorite authors include Sylvia Plath, Norman Mailer, William S. Burroughs, Ernest Hemingway, and Anne Rice. She will be attending IU in B-Town this summer.

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"Thanks babe."

Mid sip, rapid blasts of air made Bryan swivel on his stool to spy three Greyhound buses glowing through the clotted darkness from the stop across the street, their red, blue, orange, and white lighting mixing with a pulsating synchronicity, creating a carrousel effect minus the corny music. All were diesel and idled loudly while the passengers carried out their transitions.

The pub's door was quaint and heavy, much wider than most, the building having been used earlier in the century to assemble Ford Model T's. The engines were assembled upstairs, "dropped" into the chassis' downstairs and driven out the odd door that was being opened by a lanky gentleman Bryan had not seen enter the pub's foyer. Standing a minimum distance from inside its threshold, he brought with him the laborious rattle of diesel that choked out just enough of Patsy Cline's *Walkin After Midnight* for the pub's small population to witness the door close itself, muffling the drone of the idling buses.

Bryan may have been a stranger in *this* pub, but he was no stranger to pub mechanics. Night after night, stool after stool; beer after beer, he used keen observation to draft a theory pertaining to the behavior and customs of the social requisites involved in pub culture. Bryan had found that it's common, upon entering an establishment, for the residing patrons to give a 5-7 second assessment of all who enter. You never know—you may want to buy them a drink or, better yet, they buy you one, or you may want to avoid them, or get to know them—it's hard to say—but it's best practice to recognize who you may be sharing your time with. Bryan's observations led to the following: All newcomers are greeted with eye contact along with either 1). A smile (feminine), 2). A quick nod