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She used to tell me that she loved me. She used to say my name with a whimsical sigh. What made her leave me on that September night? We've always had our problems, but we've always seemed to work things out.

A year ago her dog died. It drowned in her swimming pool when she was at school. I laughed because I thought that she was talking about the movie we saw the night before.

The night of our prom she asked me if her dress made her look fat. I told her that the place would be dark so it really didn't matter.

For Christmas, she gave me a picture of us in an acrylic frame that she made herself. I gave her a CD player because I spilled beer all over the one she had before.

We went to the movies to see Untamed Heart. She asked me if I liked it. I told her "no" because she got mucous and tears all over my T-shirt.

She wanted to go to dinner on the night of our anniversary. I told her I couldn't because I just bought a new pair of speakers and I wanted to listen to them.

She gave me a kiss when our song was on the radio. I said "Hey don't spill my latte. I paid four bucks for it."

We made love for the first time in the backseat of my car. She said that she loved me as she ran her fingers through my hair. I asked her when was the next time we were going to have sex.

She cried when she told me that she was leaving. I thought that she was joking. That made her cry even more.

I never understood why she left me. Could it be that I'm insensitive?
Life’s Wall
Kanittha Putnam

Green paint - Granpa’s rice field.
Red paint - Desert wind.
Black paint - He lies on his back.
Gray paint - Knowing when he would die.
White paint - His way to heaven.

Early Morning Inventory
Gail Picard

Was it only yesterday when he was here, his presence made known in a wake-up hug? Was it then when I pictured him in the faded shirts hung in his closet?

Was that when I last caught his scent in the old blue flannel bathrobe thrown loosely over the hook behind the door? I know it was just yesterday.

I scooped popcorn kernels from his frayed green chair yesterday, a reminder of family TV evenings. And I felt his strong hand in the smooth pine of the half-built toy box.

Now it is early morning of another day. I wander our house, his goodbye note clenched in my hand. The lawn mower rusts by the back door, a symbol of his legacy.

Along with rust, he left measles and report cards, mortgage and tax returns. I’ve got picnics and overstuffed turkeys, a leaky roof, broken windows. And I’ve got yesterday’s memories.
I never cried for my dad when he died. I'm not sure why. Maybe it was because he hadn't been close, either emotionally or physically, for years before his death. Maybe it was because when I came back from his funeral 3,000 miles away from my own home I had to deal with my husband and my best friend playing house while I was gone. Or maybe it was because I never felt he was important anyway. I tend to think it's a combination of all three, but it's especially for the last reason.

My dad was around when I was little, and from what I've been told, he loved my brother and me. Yet, I can remember thinking when I was about nine that I never saw him. By that time, he'd taken a job as a traveling salesman and was gone all week. On the weekends he seemed to either be sleeping or watching ball games on television. My most vivid memory of interacting with him at that time was playing marathon gin rummy games, with him keeping a meticulous record of how many points I owed him.

He always had a beer by his side, which caused many late night "discussions" (as my mom called them) between my parents. By the time I was fourteen, he didn't live with us any more. He took a room in a boarding house in the small town near where we lived. I remember being uncomfortable when he took my brother and I there to show us where he lived. I also remember being terribly embarrassed when he showed up one night at the local drug store where I was hanging out with my friends after a movie. I noticed him as he shuffled by the big front window, his head down. He looked up, saw me, and came inside. When he came up to me, I could smell the alcohol on his breath. He was sloppy drunk, started calling me Honey, and leaning on me. He was lonely, and looked like he was about to cry. That's when I maneuvered him out the door. I was ashamed of him, he seemed so pitiful. I wanted a dad I could be proud of, not the ineffectual mess he seemed to be.

A few other scenarios stand out clearly. Once, when I was about fifteen, he came to our house in the evening, when no one else was home. I opened the door, and he put his arms around me and kissed me on the lips - for too long. I broke away, feeling guilty, because for a moment I'd enjoyed it, and confused, because I knew he shouldn't have done that. Another time, when I was nineteen, I went to visit him at my grandparents house where he was then living. He had set up a cot for me in his room. When it was time to go to bed, I leant down and kissed him good night. Once again, he held on too long. As I got in bed, he asked me if I would lay down with him and give him a hug. When I told him no, he asked why not, and said something about there being nothing wrong with a father and a daughter loving each other. I was terrified, but I just lay there, not saying a word.

These memories underscore the main feelings I grew up with concerning men. Men weren't reliable, they only thought about themselves and their needs, and most of all, "who needs them?"

The females in my family further shaped my ideas about men. My grandmother, an immigrant from Sweden, kicked my grandfather out ten years after arriving in this country. As the story was told to me with much shaking of heads, he had this foolish idea of moving his family out of New York City to start a CHICKEN FARM! "Well, there was no way we were going to do THAT, so I just told him to go ahead and do whatever he wanted, I'd stay in the city with the children. So, that's what I did, and I've never regretted it."
seems pretty amazing to me, considering that it occurred in the middle of the 1930's depression. My grandmother's children were only 12 and 17, she didn't speak English very well, and hadn't worked except as a baker's assistant since immigrating. I always assumed that my grandfather had died, since my mother and grandmother always talked about him in the past tense. It was only after he died, thirty-five years later, that my cousin told me that he had indeed bought his chicken farm, and had been living there for all those years. Lesson: Men are unreliable, they only think about what they want, and who needs them, anyway?

While my dad still lived with us, my mom used to take me with her to pick up my dad at the bus stop after work. When he didn't get off the bus, she would tell me he was probably drunk, and had fallen asleep - which usually turned out to be true. She also sent me along with him on Saturday errands, where I'd spend hours waiting for him in the car while he was in a bar. Lesson: Men are unreliable and only think about their own needs.

After my parents' divorce, my mom supported us, telling us all the time how my dad wasn't paying his child support. She never said anything about missing him, just how he couldn't be counted on to help us. She hasn't been involved with another man since. When I've asked her why, she says, "I'm happy the way I am. I've gone out with a few men, but after a while they all only want one thing." Lesson: Men are unreliable, they only think about themselves, and "who needs them?"

Before he passed away, I tried to get to know my dad as an adult. I loved him, and wanted him to know it. Unfortunately, he wasn't very interested. As my brother said, "he's got his apartment, his beer, and that's all he wants." It seems like life was too much for him. He was extremely intelligent, and at one time really cared about my brother and I. But somewhere along the line, he just gave up. He withdrew from society, holed up in his apartment, and basically drank himself to death.

So here I am, twice divorced, with two sons and a daughter. Both of my marriages have been to men who seemed to be unreliable, thought mainly about their own needs, and who needs THEM? But, I am aware of giving my children a different perspective. So far, I've done alright with my first son, who's 23 now. He does what he says he's going to do, he cares deeply about the people he loves, he thinks about their needs, and knows that in a relationship he deserves being treated with respect. With the younger two I'm still trying to instill a feeling of respect and love for themselves and for other people, no matter who they are.

As for myself, I'm still wrestling with the learned lessons of my childhood, and the desire for a relationship that is based on trust, love, and respect. I understand and forgive both my father and mother, but I sure wish it had been different.
He-Mele-Inoa-'O-Lokomaika'i
K. Maunakea-Kanehailua

Ku'u pua laha'ole
Ka'ana mau no ke aloha
Mai ka pu'uwai lokomaika'i

Kau aku ka mana'o
E like no ka lei 'anuenue
Ho'omana i na keiki o ka 'aina

Ko aloha poina'ole
Ka'apuni me ka ha'aheo
E ola mau i ko ho'oilina

Pua ana ka inoa
Ka'ana mau no ke aloha
Mai ka pu'uwai lokomaka'i

A-Name-Chant-For-Lokomaika'i

Indeed it is a rare person
who shares love
generously with the heart

Ideas and thoughts are placed
like a cherished rainbow lei
Empowering the future generations

Unforgettable love
that encircles us with pride
a treasured legacy forever

Tell again the story
of a love that is always shared
with a generous heart

Akaka Falls / Dee Friedel

Westwinds 5
Untitled / Anonymous artist

Westwinds 6
I remember, as a young boy, the evening fires, as my mother would cook our family's evening meals over the red-hot coals. The sweet, tantalizing aroma of freshly-caught fish bubbling in its own natural juices, wrapped in ti leaves, coupled with the savory smell of roasting breadfruit, saturated the air like a dreams mystic humidity. And Grandfather's voice, clear and strong, retelling the ancient stories and myths of our people. Grandfather's stories helped to instill in me, as a young boy, a deep love for the ancient stories of our people -- and a reverence for life through positive masculinity.

My favorite stories were always those he told of Maui, the Demigod prankster, who died attempting to give mankind immortality. Grandfather said that Maui felt compassion for mankind because of how short mortal existence is, and how inevitable death is to both man and woman. Maui decided that he would conquer death for mankind, and so he transformed himself into a little bird and flew into the belly of death while death was sleeping. His intention was to vanquish death through plucking out death's heart and escaping with it, but alas it was not to be. Before he could escape out of death's mouth, death awoke and clamped down his jaws, thus ending the prankster's life. Grandfather also told of other Gods and mythical warriors in our people's stories and mythology.

It wasn't until I grew up, however, that I began to realize a common "golden" thread that ran through all of Grandfather's stories -- our people's stories. All of the warriors and Gods in Grandfather's stories, even Maui that Demigod prankster common to all Polynesian peoples, triumphed and even gave their lives in the service of their King and people. These mythical warriors were always rescuing the King's daughter, or standing alone in battle, while men of lesser heart broke and ran. These mythical warriors were at their best serving a just King, or a cause beyond and greater than themselves, and were able to perform superhuman feats in the strength of their faith and conviction in the nature of their duty.

One of these mythical warriors single-handedly rescued the King's daughter from an enemy fortress in his retreat the alarm was sounded. Carrying the little Princess in one arm and wielding his famous war spear in the other, he slowly retreated towards the King's war-canoes awaiting on the beach. Parrying the enemy's spears and war clubs, he was drawing nearer the war-canoes when the enemy's two greatest warriors appeared on the beach. One of these two warriors said to the other, "This warrior cannot be killed unless we both stab at the same time, for he will parry one of our war spears but must either take injury or suffer the Princess to die in his arms".

So they both expertly thrust their spears at the same time, and this mythical warrior expertly parried one spear and swung the little Princess to his safe side and exposed himself to the deadly spear. The blade sank deep into his ribcage, but having a mission to complete, he hit down with all his remaining strength and broke the shaft of the offending spear, while thrusting his own spear into the owner of the spearhead embedded in his side. The King's warriors finally reached his side, and they made it back to the war-canoes. But alas, the wound was a mortal one. The King's gratitude knew no bounds. Yet, the King knew that he was in jeopardy of losing his greatest warrior ever -- and so he ordered his men not to fulfill this mythical warrior's request of crying out when his home island was sighted. The King still had high hopes of having his medicine-men cure him once they reached their homeland. One of the rowers, however, forgot the King's orders and cried out when they sighted this
mythical warrior's home island. Upon hearing the rower's cry, the warrior grabbed the broken shaft of the spear and pulled the spearhead out and ended his suffering. This story and many others were Grandfather's way of showing his Aloha for me, and passing on the idea of the warrior -- ritualized in song and dance in our people's history.

Grandfather passed away when I was ten years old, but his memory and his stories continued to live on through me. They proved especially helpful when I was twelve, and my parents started having some serious marital problems. I couldn't stand life at home because it seemed everyone was always fighting over something. I cut school throughout my three years of junior high school. The teachers didn't care anyway and they passed me on to High School. It was right about then when the State of Hawaii invented the School Truancy Law which made it really hard for juvenile delinquents like me to enjoy ourselves at the beach during school hours. I figured life just wouldn't be normal for me anymore if I couldn't outwit those never-do-good politicians -- and then I hit upon it -- the library! Who would ever think to look for students cutting school at the library, of all places? So I cut school at the library for three school years straight. At first I found it kind of boring, just sleeping or watching pretty girls and cute librarians, but then I began to look around. And lo and behold, I started to come across Grandfather's stories all over again! Only this time, they were stories of other people's mythical warriors and mythology.

I read of Odin, Baldur, Loki and Thor of the Norsemen, and of Sigmund the warrior, and Fafnir the dragon as well. I triumphed with Theseus over the Minotaur, with Perseus over the snake-haired Medusa, and sweated along with Hercules performing his twelve labors. Beowulf and I were the best of mates, and shared many a cup of sweet mead together. I revelled in my madness with Sir Roland and Sir Tristan, and lived for the joust and the rescue of damsels in distress. Sir Galahad didn't have a thing over me when it came to personal purity, and the Lady Of The Lake would not have found a more worthy hand to wield Excalibur. King Arthur was my mentor, and Gilgamesh and his "wildman" friend, my comrades in arms. Rama could not shoot an arrow any straighter than I, and Robin Hood and William Tell were my peers. Achilles and Ajax, along with Ulysses, were my drinking companions on Trojan shores, with Aries our patron. Momotaro and I conquered the ogres, and all of Japan was the beneficiary. I marched with Alexander The Great, Hannibal, Ghengis Khan, Alaric and the Germanic Visigoths, and with Attila and his Huns as well. Grandfather's stories lived once more, and it was as if he were alive and telling me these stories he had forgotten to tell before.

Through Grandfather's stories I was able to have a positive image of masculinity, and what it means to be a warrior. Our people's stories of warriorhood are all of the positive "interior" warrior - much the same as other people's stories and mythology. I really believe Jung was onto something in his theory of the Universal Unconscious and the idea of the archetype. Unfortunately, I believe, as does Joseph Campbell, that we have reduced the importance and the significance of our people's stories or mythology to the same value we place on our elderly. Especially if you've lived through Reaganomics -- the idea hits home with more impact. I will forever be grateful for a Grandfather who took the time to tell me these stories of other people's mythical warriors, for I see in myself what I would like to become -- and that is just as these mythical warriors are. I am also grateful for other people's stories and mythical warriors as well, for they speak to me in moments of tranquility. It is life affirmation through positive masculinity.
X & I
Anonymous Jr

Gustier than the weeping willow in a hurricane, 
She glides on the crests of waves, 
Ethereal, with an aura of 
Bright silvery-white and pale gold light around her. 
She wears a wine-colored, long-sleeved, below-the-knee-length, flowing dress. 
She pirouettes, pivots, and prances like a paper airplane in sostenuto breezes, 
Her gestures and motions smooth as quicksilver.

Her hugs hear but do not hear. 

Graceful, light on her feet, smooth and fluid-like, like legato, 
She is the flame 
and my heart is the candle, 
Like drugs to my soul.

God says, "Do no violence to the alien, the fatherless, the widow."

Gutsier than a wicked wahine in a harried huff, 
She dervish-whirls on my, the alien's, soul. 

Aloha personified!

My soul-- 
Rips away. 
Waves of sobs crash into my hands.

"Death, hold me in your arms."

Her allies go into exile. 
They kneel in each others' arms. 
Like a hula from Hell, 
The wind drives all away.

Seeing but not seeing, 
She bends over, weeps 
Golden and pink tears, 
Under the full moon and stars, 
Like my parents do.

Then she dances again atop the crests of waves, 
While I watch and wipe my weary but wired eyes.
I hear the sound of a shot while I feed the chickens in the back yard. I drop the rice bowl and run to get my grandmother at the water wheel.

"We have to go Grandma, the communists are coming."
"I don't want to leave."
"But you have to Grandma."
"There will be no where like this home," she said.
"Your grandfather built this house, and I planted that mango tree. I don't like war. Why do these things keep happening to me?"

The mass of Kunyas communists are moving out of the jungle toward our village. They want to take over and use our village for their base camp. From our home on the hill, I can see them coming. Everyone of them is carrying a gun and a knife. They wear red head bands, black pants, and black shirts with tigers printed on the front. Their faces are darkened with charcoal. I can only see their white eyeballs and white teeth that reflect in the moonlight. At the same time, about a hundred soldiers in army trucks are coming through the other side of the village.

"Let's go Grandma. The communists and the soldiers are coming! Hurry, Grandma, hurry. We are running out of time." She says something, but I cannot hear what she says. The villagers are yelling.

Grandma runs back from the water wheel to the house. She grabs the flower print quilt, throws in the gold belt my grandfather gave to her when they got married, an old aluminum teapot, a gas lantern, and a jar of smelling salts and ties the corners together.

"Why are these things so important to you Grandma?" I ask. She looks me in the eyes as she hands them to me.

"Your grandfather and I started our life with these things, and I want you to have them to start your new life."

I grab her hand, and I lead her to the truck that is moving people to a safe place. She pulls her hand away. "I want you to go ahead. I have so many memories here. I don't want to leave." She turns around and walks toward the house. I lose sight of her as the truck moves away.
Fyodor, Lara, and I were in the bus, and talked about Lara's baby who would be born in four months. They thought they would name the baby Alexander if it was a boy. I told Lara that I had a dream about the baby being a boy. She liked that, but she would be happy anyway, whether it was a boy or a girl. The bus stopped by the Grand Palace and was already late that evening. All three of us were so tired from working hard all day at the factory where we made grey suits.

I hated sewing these suits. The color was so dull, and so depressing. I hated grey because it reminded me of the people who were exterminated in the death camps. I was worried for my friend Fyodor because he was Jewish, and had been able to disguise his religious aspirations, even if it made him feel ashamed. I was always afraid that one day he would be arrested. That day came when we were on the bus wondering if we would be able to cook a decent meal that night.

All three of us lived in one small flat with just two rooms. Things would get cramped with the arrival of the baby. We were so poor. Sewing grey suits did not pay much. Two men in grey suits stopped the bus and called to the three of us. We were arrested and put in a truck that took us to a camp. Fyodor did not say a word, but looked after his wife. I did not know how they found out about Fyodor. It probably was the bitch who lived upstairs from our apartment. I wondered what she thought she would get by telling, maybe just a good screw with one of the police bastards.

While we stood outside, I looked at Lara's belly, and wondered about that baby. I thought he would be lucky not to be born. I thought he would never know about this rotten world where people were wiped out by millions because of their religion. I also remembered that some good existed in this world, and that baby would have learned that with his parents. The last thing I saw was Fyodor and Lara walking together towards the building with the chimney blowing a stinky and heavy thick smoke.
The picture catches your eye. It's the kind you've always liked—black and white. Of all the pictures in the gallery, you pick this photograph out because of the way the door is framed against the light and the wooden table has no tablecloth, yet there are four plates set, one before each chair. Even though the picture was taken in a restaurant, it reminds you of home.

You haven't thought of home for quite some time. The photograph brings memories of the day you had to leave your home behind. You had dreaded that moment for a long time and all too soon the suitcases and bags were already waiting by the door. That night, you stared at the naked walls and at the L-shaped indentations in the carpet that betrayed where your bookshelves and dresser had been. You then gazed at your bed and at the little table next to it. The table had already been cleared of your stuff: ponytail holders, barrettes, and your stuffed tiger. The only thing left was the clock with the colon in the liquid-crystal display blinking away the seconds.

You went downstairs. Once again the wooden steps creaked under your weight. As you made your way around the house, you passed by its other inhabitants. Your mother was trying to squeeze one more sweater into a bag. Your father, seated on the couch, was feeling his pockets for the passports.

You crossed the kitchen and went into the spare room where you used to play and read in the summer and do your homework in the winter. You sat at your table, a round top balanced over an iron leg. You caressed its uneven and bumpy surface. Your father had repainted it white without stripping the old coat first. The coldness of the iron made you remember the six suitcases and the bags waiting by the front door. You wondered how all your lives could be packed in them. Your eyes brimmed with tears at the thought of your very first doll, your stuffed dog, your drawings, the things, the parts of you, that had to be sold or thrown away.

Your mother called. It was time to go. As you gave the table a last friendly pat, you swore, "I'll be back."

It has been ten years since you made that promise. You'd forgotten all about it until today when you saw the photograph. What is it about the picture that reminds you of your promise? The table. Four places are already set, but the plates are all facing down—waiting.
Black

Roberta Spencer

The sickness that covers the earth, no moon.
The sleep that comes in the night.
Swarms of mosquitoes, spiders dangling in caves,
Maiming and killing of innocent life.
Sharp cutting edges of lava rock,
Crows pecking out beady eyes of a devil dog.
Mother sleeps in her lover's bed.
Muck of a swamp.
Witches and cats, Halloween fright.
Big boiling kettle pots cooking with bats and frogs.
Voices in the dark, dogs howling in the night.
Children's innocence sold to the devil.
Flesh melting, burning death in your backyard.
Bullets flying in the night.
Huddled in bed, hostage to the night.
World of violence decaying with despair,
Darkness of greed, no one cares.
Held hostage, captured, a journal against your will.
The nothingness of a mind closed to love.
We walked to the beach today, Nanea, Grandma and the red wagon. The large bag of toys bounced to and fro...... as the wheels clicked over the black, hot pavement.

Barking from behind the high iron castle gates announced the presence of a ferocious, beady eyed, white fanged creature wanting to devour us.

My grandma pulls the wagon faster, as I grip my package of toys. Ahead is the opening to a small narrow path. Emerald green grass spreads its arms to reach the twinkling white sand. "Grandma, pull, pull." Our wagon became harder to pull down the path's right-of-way, wheels sinking like quick sand. As we tried to escape down the sandy path, I flew out of the wagon. "I help, I help, Grandma." Two little hands pushed the back of the wagon.

Grandma pulled from the front. Klunk, klunk went the wagon down the path.

Grandma and I were so excited to see before out eyes - the huge magnificent blue ocean of the world. Scoop net, one... two... three go off to the rocks. "Grandma, I'm going to catch a crab." As I ran, I saw Grandma kicking off her slippers. They soared in the air like blue sea gulls.

The sand was cool and wet between my toes as I ran to the rocks. "Grandma, let's look for treasures." We found beach glass. They were emeralds and diamonds. Shells that were lavender and purple were scattered on the sand. "Grandma look! Listen to the ocean." I lifted the large cowry shell to my grandma's ear. She smiled and said I was her treasure.
Eggshells

They push their oversized shopping wagon, and hoard three pounds of peanut butter, five pounds of frozen peaches, a pack of 10 Bic pens, two dozen eggs, 36 ounces of maple syrup, and a pack of 20 double-A batteries. They wind their way to the breads and she passes two loaves of 100% whole wheat bread in one package to him. He places it in their shopping cart, and asks, "Can't we buy white?"

"Brown bread is a good source of fiber."
"I don't need oats, groats, and hay in my bread. I shit well enough on my own."
"Then buy your white bread. You already bought batteries we don't need."
"If I don't need the batteries, you don't need the pens."
"A writer needs her tools the same way you 'needed' that 65-piece ratchet set."
"Then keep your pens and let me buy my white bread."
"Isn't that what I just said? Buy your white bread. Just don't expect me to pity you when you get colon cancer 20 years from now."

He grabs the value pack of white bread, two loaves in one package, and flings it into their cart. "Do you think you're in a basketball game?"

"No. Do you?"
"You just threw your bread into the cart like it was worth two points! You almost smashed my eggs." He rolls his eyes to the ceiling and opens the carton of eggs. He begins to examine each egg, looking for any cracks in their shells. "You don't have to check each one!"

She steers him to the fresh produce section. He pushes the cart in silence, staring at the four loaves of bread in the cart. "We don't need four loaves of bread."

She sifts through the red apples in silence, hunting for firm, bruiseless ones. She bags five apples, and shoulders through the crowd gathered around the bananas and papayas. Twirling bunches of bananas, she settles for a bunch with the least amount of sap and dirt on the peels.

He fiddles with the folded sleeves of his shirt, waiting for her to find her perfect fruits. She scrunches her eyebrows, nose and lips as she's about to place her second papaya in a plastic bag. She glares at him through thin slit eyes. "You farted."

He smiles proudly. "It's your brown bread."
"Don't blame my bread. How can you be so crude? I bet the ladies standing next to me smelled and heard everything."

"I could've farted on the way to the check-out if you didn't take so long."
"Why didn't you go stand by the cookies or something."
"What am I supposed to do? Turn my ass down the cookie aisle and yell, Blue fog special! Blue fog special!"

"Shut-up! You're embarrassing me. Don't you have any shame?"
"About what? Gas? Everybody has gas."
"About everything. You weren't like this when we first started to go out."
"What are you saying? You only love me when I don't fart, burp, or shit."
"No. I fell in love with you because you didn't fart, burp, or shit."
"Give me a break."
"It's true. You never used to fart or burp in front of me. And you used to shit with the bathroom door closed. Now you smile with your pants around your ankles, light a match, and tell me, 'Smells like roses.' "

"Well it does."

They wait in line to pay for their goods. With two couples ahead of them, they're soon sandwiched in-between a line of strangers as more customers push their carts to the cashier. "Hey, babe. Wouldn't it be neat if I farted and all these customers left? I could pay for our shit and be out of here in less than five minutes."

"Don't you dare."

He hugs her and says, "Too late."

"You know, you were right. I don't really love your burps, farts and roses. Go pay for your own fuckin' bread."

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**Counting Mangoes**  
*Sharolyn Oshiro*

She sits, sleeps, eats, and shits in a small room. Her skin hangs on her shoulders like a shawl, and her breasts blend into her waistline. All her muscles have atrophied except for her brain and her heart. The width of her thighs is not much larger than the width of her arms. Swollen elbows and knees protrude her skin.

She gazes at the mango tree from her bedroom window, and waits for the overripe fruits to fall. She counts 9 today. Yesterday, 5, tomorrow she guesses, maybe 7.

The painted Jesus on her plate talks to her. Her gums, pink as a tuberose, glisten with saliva as she explains her secret. "Jesus wants the flowers," she says, "to bloom."

She pours water from her cup into her Kleenex Box, and layers of damp kleenex bleed moisture onto her bureau. The flowers, peach and lavender, the braids of mint leaves and vines drink the water, she says.

Her cold and bony hand reaches for her flowers. She rests the box at Jesus' painted feet, and prays for her mangoes to stop falling from her tree.
Black and Blue

Roberta Spencer

Gloom and darkness, dropping fear
Two figures, heads hung down
Wagon empty, nothing in it
Rain, rain, heavy rain
Cold annoying wind, capture hungry homeless people
Betting, shouting, sirens screaming
Damp, musty, mushroom mold
Pollution, poison popping up all over
Gladiator plownmen, weighted down
Skyline disintegrating
Earth dragging, so many things to do
Planet crying, human race dying

Elk Anders / Bonnie Lisa Pestana

Westwinds 17
Volcanic Disaster

Laurence Skow

One day it became too hazardous for us and for the other habitants to live safely. We lived on the slope of a volcano about to erupt. The grounds became unstable and steam came out of holes. The location was very high in elevation, and the road was never going to be built because the conditions were too dry and cold. The chalet was situated near the ski trail. We had to evacuate on skis because no one could reach us and evacuate us with modern vehicles. The cats would have to be carried on my back. They bundled in a box with a sliding window that opened up on three pairs of frightened eyes whenever we stopped to rest. Eventually, we reached the cleared plateau where helicopters were waiting for us. At that moment, the volcano erupted so loudly it sounded as if a bomb had exploded. The ground shook so hard that I lost my balance, partially because of the cats moving and screaming inside the box. They were restless and it became a struggle to walk towards the helicopters. I reached the helicopters, and jumped into them just before they took off because a lava flow was coming down the slopes like an avalanche. The cats and I were very scared. I did not scream because my mission was to save my cats. I did not want to let them die because my cats were my happiness. Nevertheless, the cats would not stay still. As the helicopter elevated itself, I looked down at the raging lava eating everything on its passage until it reached the end of the slope and poured into a ravine. I lost my house, but my cats and I were safely flying away to a new life.

A Moment of Truth

Laurence Skow

I was excited to go on my first dive with Richard. I had just completed my certification requiring much effort and courage. I put on all the gear. I hated that part because it weighed a ton. I could not wait to get in the water, because the gear would not feel so heavy then. That day, we decided to make a reef entry, which was a lot easier than kicking for a few hundred yards before going down. It also was safer, because divers were always at risk when they stayed on the surface. Richard went in first, and I followed him. Once we were in the water, we swam away from the reef. Richard went down first to tie the rope. It was easier for me to descend with the rope. I had something to hold on to. When we got to the bottom, we enjoyed being around the fish. Suddenly, a large shark came out of a cavern looking frantic. I got scared and swam towards the rocks to seek protection. Richard did not have time to move because the shark charged him, but missed. Then, it made circles around him. Richard turned with the shark to keep the light in its eyes. It was a successful strategy, and the shark swam away. I felt relieved to see Richard free of danger. Nevertheless, we would have to get out of the water, because it was too dangerous to keep diving. As we ascended to the surface with Richard leading the way, the shark reappeared charging Richard. I knew nothing could stop the shark. As I sat on the reef, I tried not to scream as I kept seeing Richard's head disappearing in the shark's mouth and his body floating away headless.

Westwinds 18
Waikiki After Dark
Buddy Vidal

When the sun melts,
Waikiki glistens like a chromium plate
bolted to the bumper of an '89 Corvette.
It is a hot, sweaty city,
Full of cut-up jeans and summer breath,
Bare ankles and the smell of cheap beer at the Shell.
Down Kuhio, street lights shine
Upon slender, tight hips and six inch heels.
On Kalakaua, quartets of Hare Krishnas bow to Vishnu
Whose shape is that of a red paper flower
Open in their silent hands.
Waikiki is a city after midnight,
The Jazz Cellar "don't stop 'til you drop" operator,
The stairway down into ten feet of metal
And one-hundred-forty decibels of Axel Rose.
Bodies fade into the Point After,
And emerge from the Pink Cadillac,
Not knowing if this night's face
Was last night's memory loss.
Waikiki is a city full of potholes and half-empty notions,
A "Put our hands up or I'll shake you down" city.
It is like a dove that flies under its own will,
But is burdened by its lofty weight.
Waikiki runs and presses
Until the color drains from hotel windows
and apartment shutters close out the blooming dawn.

Untitled / Anonymous artist

Westwinds 19
She was on her knees potting a dozen spider plantlets when she noticed it. She happened to look up and her eyes rested on the fence. Something was wrong with it. After a few minutes, she realized that the fence was leaning slightly at an angle as if the vines covering it were too great of a weight.

The fence needed to be fixed. She and Frank had known that ever since they first came to look at the house, but Frank had kept putting it off. During the summer, when the neighbor's vines had climbed over it and spilled onto their side, the fence did not look dilapidated at all. However in the winter, when the vines had died back, every crack, every missing piece and every hole had seemed to holler at them. Yet Frank never had gotten around to fixing the fence, there were always other more important things to do.

Frank was gone now. One night, he had announced to her that he wanted out. Since their divorce, she had surprised herself browsing through catalogs for fix-it books and noticing things about the house that she had never seemed to see before when Frank had been around: the tear in the screen door, the crooked bi-fold doors in her closet, the rusty spring-loaded plugs in the screen windows. She added the fence to her list. She would have to talk her brother into fixing the fence too. The telephone rang in the kitchen. Her brother was on the line, "Sorry, I can't come down to fix the screen door. The baby has been fussy all night and Lorine's back is bothering her again. Next week? No, can't. We have a party. How about the following week, Ok? Great, I'll see you then."

As she hung up, she looked at the kitchen screen door. The wind blew open the tear running along the frame. Then, her eyes went beyond the screen and found the fence. The cracks seemed to have spread. The fence looked dirtier than ever, and it also looked as if it was leaning closer to the ground.

"I don't have to wait," she said to herself. "I have hands, too." She went into the garden and looked around until she found what she wanted among the tall weeds: a length of pipe left from an earlier remodeling project. She picked up the kitchen and made a call.

"Yes, can you send me a copy of the book Anything He Can Fix, I Can Fix Better?"
I remember lying there, in the sheer tent in the backyard—waiting. It was a beautiful summer day in Oregon. I was lying there on my belly, propped up on my elbows with my legs bent at the knee—waiting. I was so excited at the prospect of seeing him again. Pretending to read some quaint selection only a nine year old would choose—waiting. It had been a month since I'd seen him last, although it seemed like eternity. I lay—waiting. I knew that he had arrived by the laughter that came from within the house. I knew he would come to me. Search me out. His little princess, so I lay—waiting. This was my first of twenty-four foster homes, so he had to come for me. I lay—waiting. My heart was bursting from the pain in my chest, and my tears began to sting as they slowly ran down my cheeks. I lay—waiting. He never came to me. My heart still lies—waiting.

I remember a time when I was much younger, perhaps around five. My mother had been taken away to a mental institution, so we only had maids. They usually didn't last too long because the four of us were bad children. My father worked swing-shift at White Sands Missile Base, Texas, where we lived at the time. I don't remember ever seeing my father much, and when I did, it seemed that my head was a tornado of jealousy. Of the four kids, he always seemed to pull my little sister from the group and have her dance for his friends. It was all very innocent, and we all laughed, but there was a deep part of me that would cry out, "Why not me, Daddy? What's wrong with me?"

When we were bad girls, we would be punished. When my father worked it seemed that my sisters, there were three of us and my brother, were always in some sort of trouble. I recall being locked in our room for days at a time—waiting. The maid would open our door only long enough to slide a tray of food in along the floor. We had our own bathroom so there was no reason for the bad girls to be let out. I, being the oldest girl, and the instigator, would convince my younger sisters to do my dirty deeds.

Well, after being locked in our room a day too long, I unscrewed one of the legs from the bed and convinced my sister to throw it through the window. The glass flew everywhere, and we cut ourselves as the three of us climbed out of our prison. We were free. We could walk around the neighborhood and feel the wind in our hair. We ended up at a restaurant called the White House and we snuck in and stole soda-crackers off their buffet line. I can't remember how we got back into the room, I only remember the terror of the punishment—waiting. My father would come home after working swing-shift to a maid that would relate our bad behavior. To this day I don't know if my father really knew what was going on with his children when he was away at work. But whatever this maid told him of our behavior was enough to elicit his rage. I don't remember him coming into our room and getting my sisters up in the middle of the night, then loading us into the car. But I do remember the occasional rides to the coyote desert. The sounds of the coyotes' howling terrified me to the bone. He would drive us out of El Paso into a very dark and lonely desert, where there were no other people, just howling coyotes in the distance. He would stop the car, my sisters would all be crying as my father told us to get out of the car. He told us he was leaving us there for the coyotes because we were so bad. Never once did I cry. I was too afraid. I remember so clearly standing there looking at him as he told us how bad we were. All I could do was stand there. I had always planned to jump on the back bumper if he started to drive away.
Thank God, he never did drive away and leave us.

When I was nine, my brother, sisters and I were removed from our father's home. A thoughtful neighbor decided to call the authorities after my youngest sister showed up on their doorstep with a cold, asking for her mommy. At the time, I was the female head of the household, trying to convince my father that we didn't need another step-mother. It didn't work. The state came to my father and offered to help him out, by taking his children off his hands temporarily, until he could get back on his feet. He agreed.

This was a devastating period in my life. When they came to pick us up, I remember sitting on the edge of the backseat in anticipation of my future. I was almost excited. Once I arrived at the first home, and realized the harsh reality that I wasn't going to see my daddy for quite awhile, a part of me died. All I could do was cry, and I cried for years. At one point, I cried every morning when I woke, because the reality of my life was too painful. I was waiting for my father to rescue me from all the pain.

My father was my God. He could never do anything wrong. The pedestal that I placed him on gave me the strength to keep going, even though I would only see him once a month for a weekend visit. I would always stand in front of the window, where I would sing him a secret little love song, waiting for his arrival. The weekends were too short and it seemed that before I could blink an eye I'd be on my way back to some foster home. These were extremely emotionally charged goodbyes. Dad would drive close to 200 miles, delivering us back to our individual foster homes. All the girls would scream and cry because it was too difficult to part. I became very angry and rebellious and began to act out. I ran away many times, got kicked out of school and ended up getting sent to a maximum security home for girls, complete with 12-foot high barbed-wire fences.

By the time I left my last foster home, I was a very lost soul. I had finally been allowed to move back home. My father had to get remarried and become settled before the children were allowed to return. This had taken close to four years. Because I had been such a bad girl in those foster homes, I was the third child to be returned home. I guess my sister must have been really bad because she came home last. Within six months I had run away because I couldn't handle my new step-mother, and her favoritism toward her own children. I lived on the streets for a year and a half until I had a heart attack from a drug overdose at fourteen. I was put back into foster care until I was emancipated at fifteen, because I was so out of control.

I entered my adult life with an enormous amount of pain and confusion about being a human being. I felt that I was totally unlovable, unworthy, and unlikable, because both my parents abandoned me. I suffered from low self-esteem, in fact it was no self-esteem. I truly hated living in my skin, so I used drugs to control all the pain and hate. I wasn't ever a hard-core addict (especially after the overdose—I'd learned a powerful lesson). I couldn't lose that much control. It was my responsibility to work and take care of myself because I knew that nobody else would. I truly feel that drugs saved my life until I got into therapy at 16, because the pain was so overwhelming that I thought it would kill me.

Learning to cry was the most important coping skill I ever acquired, and being female was to my benefit because it was okay for me to cry—but not my brother. My brother was not so lucky, he found his coping skills in the vodka bottle. He has spent many years in prison and has struggled with depression his entire life. My brother was raised to be a man, he was
not encouraged to express his emotions and therefore he buried his pain. Currently, he resides in my home and will be celebrating his first year sober. Sobriety coupled with therapy has enabled him to delve into tormented issues. Today, I recognize how these experiences have created the person I am. After years of intensive therapy, I can look back and find the good, or at least find a gift hidden in it all. I like living in my skin today.

Today, I have a lot of love and compassion in my heart for my father. I understand where he was coming from. His father was never around, and therefore, he never learned how to be a father. Over the years my sisters and I would get together with our father and have special outings where we would discuss these childhood traumas. It was difficult for all of us, including my father, but it aided in our healing process. My father was there for us to the best of his ability and I truly respect him for his efforts. The last two years my father and I have taken trips together—alone. He loads up his R.V. with special treats and we drive up the Oregon Coast together. My father has expressed himself to me and we have become friends. There are still so many questions we both want to ask. I'm not waiting any longer.
At Home
Christina Vandenberg

i sit in his lap watching tv
he has a hard-on
he touches me
discreetly

she slams
the cupboards in the kitchen

i walk into their bedroom to say goodnight

on her side of the bed
she's naked
i cover up her tits

jesus-
my little brother's gawkin'

on his side of the bed
hugs and kisses
camouflage

he grabs at my butt
my boobs

i go to my room to get ready for bed

put a thick nightie on
he'll wake me with that wandering massage
gently

i hear the headboard
pounding my wall

Westwinds 24
On our way back to West Virginia, Dad skids off the highway at a roadside grocery. Ten-thirty on a Saturday morning finds him on his last can of Pabst Blue Ribbon beer. My seven-years-old brother Frank finishes Dad's sixth beer, while I choke on puffs from the butt of his cigar. Dad returns to the Maverick clutching another six pack and a brown paper bag full of bologna, cheese, Kool-Aid, and Wonder bread. Mom dumps the groceries on the hood of the car, then slams the door and storms toward the pay phone with her blue-grey suitcase.

Mom rushes up the basement stairs with her empty suitcase in hand, as Dad slips through the back door at sunrise, still drunk in his muddy construction clothes. Frank and I play Chinese checkers on the last day to move before eviction. Our five-month-old sister rolls off my bed onto the hardwood floor. Dad picks up the baby, pushes aside the taped boxes obstructing the front door, then jumps into the blue Ford. He cries as his shaking hands cup the bruised head of our little "Sissy."

Sissy, a married security guard at the women's prison in Alderson, swings by in her Mustang with Saturday night chilidogs from the drive-in. While I sit on the floor watching her daughter weave a witches bra out of string, Sissy hands me Scooby Doo puzzle and a boomerang, then climbs to the top of the stairs to join mom. During a Palmolive commercial, I sneak upstairs and jar the bathroom door open. Sissy drops the baby oil and wraps herself up in a towel.

At Lake Stevens, my girlfriend massages my back with a bottle of Hawaiian Tropic. When she isn't the preacher's daughter on her period, she's a horny seventeen-year-old who wants my baby. She flips me over and threatens to tell her dad everything if I don't drop out of school, marry her, and join the Navy before Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, Frank and I watch his girlfriend, Strawberry, strip to Bon Jovi. We shoot pool for the next round of Michelob, while she dances with nothing on but a Santa's cap and one of Frank's long stemmed red roses. Wearing a black leather Harley Davidson bikini, her roommate struts through the flashing lights above the stage door, licks her lips with her tongue and blows me a wet kiss.

Frank speaks in tongues at Hotchkiss Penecostal church, believing the Spirit will reveal his future wife as the next woman who appears in the doorway. A divorcee named Dora, a miserable Christian who craves persecution, parades through the door in her Sunday dress. She testifies in front of the congregation, forgiving her alcoholic father for sexually abusing her as a child. She wails in front of the pulpit, praying for the church to forgive her oldest daughter for fornicating with some stranger at Billy Joe's Disco.

At Malone's Bar & Grill, a barefoot gypsy with little more on than black lipstick offers me a puff on her clove cigarette. She further interrupts my draft beer and fried mushrooms with a kiss on the cheek and a request to slow dance. Our one night stand at the Holiday Inn turns into four years of marriage and two ugly brats, then my promiscuous wife demands a divorce and alimony to enjoy other encounters.

Dad, who slept on the couch last night, calls and asks me if I need money for a lawyer, then gives me the best advice he can. "Well, what do you want me to do? Mother was unhappy and wanted a divorce, but divorce was out of the question. We didn't want to worry you kids."
For a Time  
Brenda Harrington

Jack stepped outside, flinching at the day's bright light. He was a night person and quickly fumbled for his shades to stop its invading glare. Day blinders in place, he blinked rapidly to eliminate the golden orbs remaining in his hazel eyes. Perspiration rapidly began to seep through the yellow scarf he had tied on his head to hide his shorn, dark blonde locks. Damn, he hated short hair and he still resented Deborah for her attempts to masquerade him in respectability's aura.

His battered suitcase slapped painfully against his knee as he descended the steps to the street. He could have tolerated the hair, at least for awhile, but goddammit, she had begun talking marriage. That he could not tolerate. True, she was bringing in the dollars, as had the other women he had been involved with, but in the end it always came to this and he had to leave them. They never remained content with the companionship, sex, errand-running and conversation he provided. They always wanted more, and he did not have it to give them.

He couldn't bear their tearful confrontations and the unwarranted guilt they heaped on him. It too closely resembled the scenes he had endured with his mother. She had finally thrown him out after one last painful evening of shouting and tears. That's why he was always the one to leave first now. He didn't understand women. They were stronger than he, they had a survival instinct he didn't possess, they had skills and gifts and a third dimension to them that always allowed them to get by in life. Why couldn't they recognize this in themselves, be content and get off his back?

He loved and admired women for possessing what he lacked. If he could only find one that would be satisfied with what he had to offer for a sufficient length of time, he knew he could reach his full potential. Jack was a poet and he knew he had talent. The women always thought so too, at first, and enamored with his gift, were more than happy to support him - for a time. Then, when his writing failed to produce the income they eventually expected, they always demanded that he find a "regular" job, marry them, or both.

Deborah had become a real pain in the ass towards the end. She had been a psychology major in college and had begun to try and psychoanalyze him. The long hours he spent in his room writing were an "antisocial" characteristic. His refusal to make a commitment with her was due to the fact that his father had split when he was seven and failed to provide the proper "role model." Christ, if he needed a shrink he would have gone to a professional one. Why had he let her wheedle his past out of him anyway? Sympathy for your misfortunes always turned into fault finding if you revealed too much of yourself.

He quickened his pace. The Greyhound station was only a few more blocks. Las Vegas was a hell of a place to write poetry anyway. The god-damn sun was so bright you could practically hear your brain cells frying. Maybe he'd head for Reno, at least it was cool there. He could wear all black again, like he preferred, and let his hair grow. In anticipation, he put his suitcase down and removed the small earring with the dangling skeleton from his pocket and put it back in his left ear. Deborah had never let him wear it. Suzanne should still be in Reno. She had written him some time back to see how his writing was going, if he'd had anything published recently. He'd give her a call. After all, he really did love women and they loved him - for a time.

Westwinds 26
Lullaby
Sharolyn Oshiro

Cry, bud baby
in the cradle
of my ears.

Red licorice falls
on the kitchen floor.

Pulse, jellybean
baby in the lines
of my smile.

The weeds
are hoed away.

Hush, little baby,
tears fall
on rosary beads.

Ashes and incense,
Drift to the ground.

Sleep, pea body
in the webs
of my eyes.

Mama will dust
the matchboxes clean.
Funny how a fragrance can capture memories. Take the smell of honeysuckle. One day, at a family reunion in New Jersey, my cousin, Mary showed me the fragrant vine-like plants clinging to the wild hedges on the hillside. "That's honeysuckle," she said matter-of-factly, as if everyone should know, holding the white blossom between her thumb and forefinger. She was walking away from me toward the woods, sunlight dancing off her hair. So, that familiar sweet smell of spring I had always known now had a name.

She was the free spirit of the family: Mary. Cheerful, deep blue eyes behind rimless glass and a shock of dirty blonde hair always cut short and straight. When she laughed, she would throw her head back and give out a throaty sound of the bellows, vitality dancing from her sparkling eyes. "So, that's what they call it," I said.

Back then, I was working at the post office where I would walk the expanse of oak and maple-lined greenswards of this rich community of Metuch in the Jewish neighborhoods while delivering mail. Afterwards, I would pass by the honeysuckle blooms in Roosevelt Park and there, one day, I saw Diane Sande in a halter top and tight jeans. My heart jumped and I could barely stammer out, "Hello."

She looked up from under straw bangs with deep green eyes and time stood still. Suspended in fierce expectancy, while my nose and tongue tasted the honeysuckle on the hillsides, my heart hammered like a piledriver. In the evening, I cut the grass at the sunken garden portion of the Ramble Inn, a turn of the century ramshackle hostel in its death throes, a precursor to what we now call bed and breakfast.

While trimming the hedgerows, I noticed the honeysuckle vines entangled in them. "Nothing is ever as neat as you want it to be," I thought to myself. I peered over the bushes and saw the doctor drive up the way with his shiny black El Dorado, and his cancer-scarred face barely hid despair as he went to make his rounds next door at the old folks' home.

During Mary's final trip to Mom's, the honeysuckle bloomed its lavender petals. In the August evening, we sat around the campfire and played guitar and sang drunk while summer fragrance danced along the moonbeams and the lightning bugs drifted through the hands of chasing children. I strummed Neil Diamond's "I am, I said." "LA's fine, but it ain't home, / New york's home but it ain't mine / no more..." Mary said, "You're gonna make me cry!" I went up to her and patted her on the back and she recoiled. "Don't. It hurts. The cancer."

Now she's gone, but whenever I pass by hills of honeysuckle, I smell the fragrance, and I am taken to her back yard in San Mateo, then to her apartment in Brooklyn with Uncle Joe and the Piel's beer cans and homey smell of her corned beef and cabbage, then finally to her new resting place. She seems comfortable here now, high on a windy green hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the same ocean I swam in today. I realize she was the big sister I never had, one whom I admire and respect deeply and realize there never will be another quite like her to take her place, for she was a link in the chain that connected me with my Irish heritage.

The other day, my son asked me, "What is this, Dad?" Holding the blossom between his thumb and forefinger, just the way she would. "That's honeysuckle, Dave," I said. "So that's what they call it!" He looked up at me with tilted head and one eye squinted against the sun. "How do you know?"
Foster Garden Pathway / Bonnie Lisa Pestana

Westwinds 29
You whisper and I listen.
You shout and I follow.
Your voice calls to me.
I am pulled in, immersed in your song.
I feel your pain.
I feel your sorrow.
I am reminded of yesterdays,
And tomorrows yet to come.
You make me fearful of the future,
But you prepare me for the ride.
You accept me as I am,
Or what I may become.
You never pass judgement.
Because I am nothing without you,
I want to be like you.
A piece of iron that does not corrode.
A monument that never loses its footing.
A fluid that gently glides along the surface,
Or flows beneath my skin.
Your voice punctures my ears,
And crushes my skull like a jackhammer.
I hemorrhage and you heal with a single note.
You share with me your soul,
And I interpret it as my own.
You tell me things that I do not want to hear.
I cannot help but to listen,
For you are my god.
You guide me through your world,
Your heaven, your hell.
Sometimes lined with white picket fences,
But more often than not,
Lined with barbed wire fences.
You trap me, you pigeon hole me.
You bury me six feet under.
I struggle to climb out.
Dirt under my finger nails,
Soil lodged in my throat,
I gasp for breath as light turns to dark.
You then flood me with air.
I am confused and uncertain,
Bewildered by your motives.
I do not know who I am.
I sometimes wish that you were more forgiving,
More compassionate to my fragile state of mind.
But I know that is not your way.
You share with me your heart.
You lie naked for me to see.
You unmask me and I am naked before you.
You breathe on my ear lobe.
I tremble as you probe me with your voice.
Have your way with me. I am at your knees.
You clutch my balls
and squeeze like a vice.
I wince in pain.
Still, you do not release.
You are a sadist,
Yet I find comfort in your hands.
You bring forth emotion.
You unleash my fury.
You make me feel alive.
Whether you are a faint melody in the back of my mind,
Or a forceful one at the pit of my stomach,
I will listen to you until I can hear no more.

The House of Winston

*Steve Donahue*

Uncle Joe was a Macy's parade balloon Boston terrier.
Aunt Jane was the same, minus some helium.

The six cases of beer in their pantry
rotated like sharks' teeth
so that a new one was always ready

Bubba, the dachshund, dragged his dick across the kitchen linoleum
and coughed up a yelp at the screen door,
whenever he thought he heard the mailman.

I was three hit stoned at nine in the morning
when my mother came in crying.
Aunt Jane was dead, her brain exploded.
"Bubba," I thought,
"now who will feed him his Oreos?"
a.m. scene
Isabel Siu-Li

"Early morning air is best."
I draw a deep breath and I know
today's morning wears the scent of rain.
I search for the moon
but her reign has already waned.
Rosy clouds tinged with gold
sail from the East.

In the lamp light,
I follow my shadow.
I gaze into each puddle
lying along the road and find pieces
of Heaven fallen to Earth.

Lakewood, Washington
Dee Friedel

Plump raindrops splatter the withered log.
Ducks spill out of the pond,
up the bank, scatter around, patter
over it. Sleek joggers glisten
through pines that line
the bank behind it. One slows,
pants through the trees, sinks
to the weathered seat. Sweat
mingles with rain, shines faded patina.
Evening grosbeaks pass overhead.
The jogger stands and stretches, inhales
the moist smell of dusk, strides
away in a symphony of leaves.
If I could state one recurring theme that seems to run throughout my life, it would be fear! For a good portion of my life, I took every measure to assure that NO ONE would know I was afraid. Many times I came close to fooling myself. Naturally, if fear has been a large component of my life, it would make sense that my ideas of femininity and masculinity are also connected to fear.

My dad was raised in an upper middle class family of four. His sister was older by six years. His father was a serious and emotionally detached man until quite late in his life when he softened. His mother was a warm and caring woman, but an ultimate worrier. At the age of eighteen, he attended college with the intention of becoming a mechanical engineer. Six months later, in 1929, the Depression hit. His father lost the business he built, and the money for my dad's education ran out. My dad always worried and was fearful about his economic resources. Although he was relatively successful in his later life as a diesel mechanic, and eventually a vice president for a large electrical firm in Honolulu, I think his lack of formal education always left him fearing he wasn't good enough. My dad was a handsome and imposing man, so he covered his insecurities and fears with "looking good or okay." Appearances were everything. My mom, my brother and I all knew, we better look good!

Later a family member shed some light on this aspect of my father by telling a childhood story. When he was young, his mother would send him out to play at his friend's house in all white clothing. The friend's mother knowing this was silly and impractical, loaned him her son's play clothes and the two boys proceeded to play and get very dirty. She would bathe him and put him back in all white clothing and send him home to his mother, who was none the wiser. I remember feeling great sadness for my dad, upon hearing that story, as well as understanding some things I hadn't understood before.

I believe my brother suffered the most trying to fit into my dad's expectations. Unlike my dad, he was not mechanically nor athletically minded. Instead he was a creative person who loved art and music. These qualities were not held particularly dear by my dad. Therefore, my brother never really felt valued or validated. There was a power struggle between the two that continued throughout my brother's childhood years and into adulthood. He avoided dealing with this early on by swallowing his feelings and anesthetizing himself with alcohol and other drugs for the next thirty-some years of his life.

I remember wanting desperately to be daddy's little girl. When I was in intermediate school, there was a father-daughter dance. A friend's father had not been a part of her upbringing, went with us. She was thrilled, and so was I, to be with my father, whom everyone thought was so gorgeous and so nice. I remember, however, yearning for a real closeness that simply didn't exist. I felt my dad was always much more interested in how I looked and behaved. My dad was a "man's man," and even though great differences existed between them, he was much more interested in my brother and his friends. I thought I respected that, and remember thinking it was just how "guys" are. I know now that I never fully understood it in my heart! Therefore, my picture of masculinity was very specific. Men were critical and emotionally unavailable to me. It fascinates me to now examine my choice of the man I decided to spend my life with. In so many ways, he is extremely different from my dad. He does not operate out of fear, and he doesn't have a critical bone in his body. My
dad never gave any indication to me that he felt it important that I have an education or that I achieve something in my own right. After all, I was just a girl! I realize that my dad, in many ways, held the thinking of many men at that time. Consequently, I married when I was nineteen to begin my life, as I had seen my mother do, as an adjunct to a man. I was fooled however. The man I chose didn't see me as an adjunct, but as a person in my own right. While I saw myself as limited, he saw me as boundless. Every time I wanted to succumb to my fear, he encouraged me to find ways to push through it and to move forward. To state it simply, he has been an incredible gift to me. He evened the scales on how I view men. His task hasn't always been an easy one. My father taught me well, I too, am critical and concerned too much about appearances. My husband is also not a perfect human being. He, like my father, struggled with making himself emotionally available to me and our children.

We have raised two sons, twenty-eight and twenty-two. We have made all the mistakes that parents make in passing on their own peccadilloes. However, with that said, we have managed to raise two incredibly caring young men who are able to share their thoughts and feelings with us, and with others. Our youngest son has been the greater challenge. He is a free spirit, and in many ways is the antithesis of what is generally perceived about men. He in many ways is the Warrior King. He is a gentle soul, but very strong and clear about how he wants to live his life. He said to my husband and me not long ago that "sometimes I feel you just want me to be a little you." We realized upon hearing this that, in essence, that is exactly what our expectation had been! It is not an easy task to let go of the dreams you have for your child. We have been forced to take a long look at ourselves, through his eyes. We continue to learn many lessons from him.

My mom taught me the meaning of unconditional love. She was a loving and non-judgmental person. She was also an alcoholic. I was greatly affected by her in both positive and negative ways. I always felt her incredible love and admiration for me, while at the same time experiencing terror and mistrust because I couldn't count on what life would be like at any given moment. I became the adult in the family and was continually on the lookout for things to go wrong. My mom stopped drinking in the latter years of my childhood, but I don't think I ever opened a door or greeted my mom for the rest of her life that I wasn't in fear about what I would find! All of my emotions and feelings were tied into her behavior. I had to check in with her to see how I felt. It has taken me a long time to come to terms with those fears. I think basically, my idea of femininity was that women were rather weak and dependent. It has only been through a lot of hard work and the awareness of the place God has in my life that I have been able to come to terms with those frightening feelings and begun to replace them with a sense of strength and courage. School has been a big part of that process. There is a reading called LEARN FROM ALL THINGS that is near to my heart:

Nowhere but in your relationships will you find the necessary critical disturbance that must of necessity call forth a new way of being. Should that not be forthcoming, then pain and suffering, and the victory of the small are inevitable.

My parents both passed away, and my brother and I continue to work on establishing a close relationship. Life is seldom what we would have chosen for ourselves. I continue to be amazed at the fact that there seems to be a grander plan that I could have imagined.

Westwinds 34
Foggy Mornings
Gail Picard

Smoky tendrils creep through deserted
Mews like a month of foggy London mornings.
Stark, searing loneliness reaches far beyond
The crumbling edges of my empty world.

By noon, the smell of cold, wet fog no longer
Engulfs the city, yet its heavy, gray dampness
Still permeates empty spaces and clings
To the tattered curtains of my mind.

An angry terrier snaps at my unshod heels,
Her insistent yap a hungry demand to be fed.
Like pups on meatless bones, the barren,
Empty solitude feeds on my soul. It gnaws.

When the beast stops, does the ache remain?
I wait for pain to abate. No pleasure comes.
The fog departs but it brings no sun.
If there is no end, can there be hope?

Morning Mist / Patricia Martin
February Fourteenth

Stephen Lortz

Seven shots of peppermint schnapps and
I tell her over the phone, "Our love is a brilliant
illusion."
Silence stretches then finally she speaks
with sniffles, sobs,
and fuck-yous.
She'll "love me for forever, come what may."
--that was yesterday.
How she'd dreamt of our wonderfully romantic simultaneous
death and
imagined us on a soft, white mattress
of clouds
which, by a Divine miracle,
adjusted automatically to accommodate
for all of our sexual positions.

"I loved you!" she cried. "You were always
a bastard!"
"I know it's my fault it won't work," I said.
I meant it and I slowly, gently hung-up.
I don't know who to feel sorry for--
she'll get over it, find another, feel wanted
and be wanted;
I will never.
I'm a fake. I know it,
and I can't feel love.
Tonight, the once wondrous moon
is a cold, dead, piece of rock.
The diamond ring on her finger
time-twisted into a financial dagger
that will bleed me for 36 easy months.
Face it, our wedding vows
were certified compromises of convenience.
I was such a skillful liar--
I sent her a dozen red roses last year.
I stopped the lie tonight.
Now I want to dream I can have it again.
"I do declare there were times I was so lonesome I took some comfort there..."

Howie and I walked up the dingy cracked cement stairway to the second floor, careful not to step on the broken glass and dog-shit. I knocked on the big teakwood door and it was opened up by one snaggly old mamasan with a light moustache and long nose.
"Come inside. You want girl?"
"Yeah, mamasan, we want girl."
"Sit down, GI."

We sat in the living room of the two-room apartment. There was an oversized sofa covered with cheap green plastic and a rug that was once white was frayed at the edges and grayed by time and traffic.
Mamasan sat down at the desk near the door and wore a half smile on her wrinkled face.
"Five dolla short time, OK?"
"Okay." We handed her the funny money. In Nam we didn't use greenback dollars because the VietCong could turn around and use it anywhere in the world to buy arms, so we used something called military payment certificates, or MPC's. They could only be used in the PX's, clubs and the local economy.

We waited with four others while we heard grunting and groaning in the bedroom which only had a bamboo string curtain separating us.
One of the airmen already there jumped up in recognition,
"Hey, Howie. Thought you was still at Harvard. 4-F, you know!"
Imagine meeting you here!
Howie spotted him right away.
"Hey, Howie. Thought you was still at Harvard. 4-F, you know!"
"Nah, didn't want to go for the masters. Here's where the action is!"
Imagine two Harvard grads running into each other half a world away in a whorehouse of all places, I thought.
"I still think Faulkner is the best American writer" Howie said.
"Nah, Hemingway. Willie was too wordy. Didn't know anything about existentialist symbolism, even though everyone said he did."

Then she appeared through the curtain. She was totally nude. She smiled self consciously and it made her more appealing. She had a simple round country face and short cut Peter Pan hair.

The most remarkable thing was that she was completely shaven. She looked at us five GI's waiting and said "hello" like a nurse waiting in a doctor's waiting room, or something.

Just then we heard the sound of many feet coming up the staircase and all the women shouted in unison.
"Canh Sat!"

They scrambled up the table in the back room and crawled out the hole in the wall by the vent pipe. The opening was just big enough for the smaller Vietnamese. Not for the Americans.

Westwinds 37
We headed in the same direction, Howie in the lead. He got his head through, got his shoulders stuck and began screaming like a greased pig.
"Hey, guys, get me outta here!"
"Howie, you dummy. Can't you see we can't fit?"
"Just get me out!" He yelled.
The three of us pulled hard and Howie came tumbling down on us.
The Vietnamese police were knocking at the door. We didn't know what to do. Were we under arrest? Could they arrest us?
We didn't let them in. I guess the feeling was if we waited long enough they would go away.
Ten minutes later we heard in English.
"Open up. This is the military police."
"Oh, shit, we're in for it now!" Howie looked white as a sheet.
Must be his first bust, I thought. Can't handle the pressure.
We opened the door and the Sergeant said: "Did you guys know that you are in an off limits area?"
I was about to answer a polite "no" when Howie interjected:
"This is ridiculous!"
What a jerk, I thought. Must be Howie's first bust.
"You shouldn't have said that, Private." The Sergeant bellowed. "You're all under arrest, come with me!"
So here we are being paraded in front of curious Vietnamese onlookers who all had that knowing grin. We were handcuffed and to top it off, humiliated.
I looked over to a downcast Howie, who was redfaced and crushed in spirit, and I said, "Howie, you might be a Harvard grad, but you're still a dumbbell!"

Drugstore

Sleeping pills and cold wine.
He thought about sleeping pills and cold wine for a few months, off and on.
He wanted to die.
He already knew from past experience that he felt very, very sleepy after drinking a certain amount of alcohol, especially wine and wine coolers. He truly loved the fruity taste.
He was a responsible drinker; no drinking and driving. He has never tried sleeping pills, but he believed that if he took a lot of the strongest ones in one shot with two or three bottles of cold wine, he would finally get to die. He had heard of other people who, thanks to this magic combo, died from choking on their own vomit, or just stopped breathing. Of course, he also read about that certain percentage of victims who landed in nothing more than a coma. Still, he hoped for a complete state of death.
The sleeping pill section was right in front of him. He started checking the prices.
Someone turned the volume of the elevator music up a little. This really irritated the living piss out of him. He did not know whether to buy the pills or not. He imagined how the store would look in flames.
He left the store to go to his friend's apartment. She knew how to make home-made fire bombs.

Westwinds 38
A Man's Best Friend

Doggone it! Hey! Who turned the night off? Is it that time of the morning, so soon? I just went to sleep! Oh well, another day. I need a good, ah..., stretch! I lay and watch my master reenact his morning rituals of spooning the ground vanilla blended Kona coffee into the filter bag, pouring four cups of water into the coffee maker, spreading thick layers of peanut butter and jelly for lunch sandwiches and then he pours a bowl of raisin oat bran cereal for his breakfast.

The woman of the house gently stirs with, "The Best From The Brothers Caz," courtesy of station KINE, FM 105.1. She rolls out of her cocoon and into the shower to start her day fresh. She realizes that it is 5:45 A.M. "We are late!" She shifts into high gear setting a new world speed record that covered the distance from the bedroom to the kitchen, for a cup of coffee, and return.

Meghan, the little princess, worms out of bed into a beautiful butterfly. She is the first to brush her teeth, comb her locks and dress herself in her physical training uniform.

Two year old William lugs along as Mom and Dad race around him. William is finally dressed and ready to go to the sitter's after what seems to be hours later, but is actually 5 minutes.

I get a chance to go outside and relieve myself. I then head to the kitchen for a cool drink of water. My master is drinking his last drop of Kona Gold.

My master loads the van with checklist accuracy. School bags, lunchboxes, Mom's briefcase, his attache, backpacks, slippers, all present and accounted for. The van is loaded and ready to leave.

This hub of morning energy slowly winds down. Where is Mom? She hurries through her routine of securing the house for the day, locks all the windows, dead bolts all the doors, checks the kitchen, bathrooms and bedrooms. At last Mom turns to me, offers a milkbone treat and says, "Be a good boy and watch the house." My tail wags with pride!
I can't take this shit any more, Pat. This Goddamn kid is driving me nuts. Now he's up on the table eating the flowers.

Scotty, damn it, get down from there and leave me alone. Can't you see I'm on the phone? Get out of here.

Sorry, Pat, what was I saying? Oh yeah, shit. Speaking of which, Larry is working late again tonight. Can you believe it? It's the third night this week. Last night I burned a frickin' pot roast waiting for him. He didn't even call and tell me he was gonna be late. Could you hold on a minute? I'm gonna get another Bloody Mary. You still there? What are you up to?

Scotty, I swear I'm gonna kill you! He just poured a can of coke in the fish tank. Do fish like soda? Scotty, beat it. Stop pesterling me. Go watch Barney on t.v.

What'd you say, Pat? What? Pebbles is stoned? Why are you blowing pot in that poor dog's face, and what the hell are you doin' smoking? I thought you were gonna quit, purify your body. No, I don't hardly think flushing it out of your system with water is gonna work. That calls for another drink. Hang on a sec.

Man, these Bloody Marys are good. I really need 'em too. Between the brat and his father, I'm going stark, staring bonkers! Larry thinksh he can walk in any ole time he feelsh like it and I should jump up and down and stand on my head 'cause he wantsh to shcrew me. All he caresh about is sticking that little prick in and gettin' hish jollies. I can't remember the lasht time he even gave my pussy a deshent lick.

What's that, Scotty? Gimme that letter. Where'd it come from? Have you been playing in the dressher drawers again?

Oh fuck, Pat. I think I'm gonna puke. It's a note to Larry from Janey. You know, the blond bitch down the shreet with the fake tits and bleached smile. She worksh at Matson with him. She just loves his assh in his red jogging shorts! I didn't even know the bastard jogged, much lessh had red fuckin' jogging shorts.
green
Stephen Lortz

I don't need anything,
but I want to have it all.
And I'll get the beach house,
the Porsche, the big screen T.V.
the L.S.D. or maybe some coke.
I haven't tried coke,
I guess I'll pick it up,
but I don't need to.
If you can't give me what I want,
then I don't need you.
Believe me or don't,
but I'd kill you for it.
You want your cut?

I'll give it to you,
right across your fucking throat.
I really don't need anything,
not one fucking thing.
I don't need to describe the scene,
my attitude says it all.
Alright, I'll tell you everything is green!
—lush, writhing, envious snake,
color of money, green.
See how the veins look
beneath the skin,
and I'll tell you again,
I don't need anything.
**Sunset**  
*Gail Picard*

Flames spit and sizzle in the fireplace, singeing  
The runners of the worn hickory rocker on the hearth.  
Her children burst in from the cold,  
Two-blade skates hung loose around their muffled  
Necks. Oyster chowder simmers on the old  
Kelvinator. Warm bread smells fill the kitchen.

Now the bent old woman wanders the dingy  
Rooms of the crumbling old house, these frayed  
Memories her only companions. She paced the dreary,  
Paint-peeling hallways from box to empty box  
As she follows the lines on the walls.

Each morning she wonders if her old life  
Is around this or the next corner. Will  
She ever know again a future stretched  
From daybreak to dawn?

The fire's faded embers no longer warm her.  
Her ears have stopped listening for little  
Boy whispers. Wearily, she folds into her soul.  
She waits for sunset's end and a new sunrise.

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**Beach Scene** / *Patricia Martin*

*Westwinds 42*
Universal Codes

Along my path, I've developed different ideas and molded them to fit my understanding of life and people. These have changed from time to time (for the better or worse), much like everyone else's, it seems. But some are harder to alter or adapt than others. My mind sometimes denies these older memories, while in some deep, grey corner, it always felt and relived the truth. I think that corner is my heart.

One of those points was the discovery of the idea that boys were more privileged than girls. That's why my brother got the new toys while I had to learn to sew clothes for my dolls instead of getting store ones. He didn't have to go to Japanese language school, but I was a girl and had to learn the language. My brother was the one my father touted as the one to carry the family lineage and not some lesser human like me. He got to play without his shirt during hot summers, but I had to swelter in mine. I decided I didn't like being a girl and tried my best to be different.

Towards adolescence, after years of what felt like loneliness and bondage, I began my "expressive period." I swaggered instead of sauntered, I shouted instead of whispered, and I chose violence over crying. There was no hugging or touching, except for the occasional slap across the face or punch on the arm. Men didn't express any emotions, which suited me fine. I kept everything hidden and never got close to anyone. That's how it was supposed to be done. Then, whenever I insisted on wearing pants, my mom would have fits. And when it was supposed to be time for training bras...

Eventually hormonal fluxes began, and I discovered make-up, short dresses and jewelry. My mom was thrilled, my dad relieved, and my brother went into the military. His leaving made me believe that no matter what my appearance, guys that I revered would leave me. My father always left, my boyfriends never lasted, and those boys that I admired and wished for never materialized. Their privileges went beyond my physical presence. They had an out with the military, or school, or work. My brother was lucky to escape.

So I drank. In my family, being a man meant drinking like you were a clean drain with the faucet turned on full force above you. The other prerequisite was that you held the liquor you drank. I managed both with no problems. The whole purpose of the time was to survive. If nothing else, just survive. And even in that, the guys had better chances and opportunities. If they drank, they were men, but if we drank, we were easy sluts. They could come and go as they pleased, have access to any place, and drive any car. We had to follow all the rules, stay in our places, and wash those battered trophies of their pride. It didn't matter that the fenders didn't match, or the trunk had to be opened by going through the back seat. Those cars represented their manhood.

One of my greatest attempts at liberation was to uncap the headers on a friend's car before a stockcar race at Campbell Industrial Park. The main point was that I did it, but while I was doing it, a guy yelled from a passing car, "That's the way, braddah, make the women work." I was proud at the time to be able to do what I was supposed to be doing.

Along with all that, physical contact was only for intimacy, and emotional expressions were always avoided. To corral any guy to talk about feelings and relationships was as easy as making that first million. Unheard of, unseen, and beyond belief. We played our parts very well, not realizing that our scripts were deeply embedded by generations of programming.
Twenty years later, after my daughter was born and my mom had died, a transitional point came along and I ran into it like a bull through an automatic glass door that didn't open. I was the only support for this child, and I didn't know, didn't have, or wasn't anything. There was no "man" to do any of it, not one with all the answers. "They" were supposed to have all the answers. My father had told me so by the way he talked at the dinner table all those years before. "But," I asked myself, "what does a person do in my case?" There was instant armageddon in my head as I realized that I had not only become a person, but that men don't have all the answers, that women don't have to be submissive, and that I had an identity. I refused to give my daughter a legacy of helplessness and decided on three things. She would have her own identity, she would feel self-worth, and she would be assertive enough not to lose her soul. I knew what it felt like to lose your soul and drown in absolute helplessness. I'd done it for years without knowing it because that's what the youngest child was supposed to do in my family.

As for a father, I couldn't give her that, but it had been his choice not to be here. Besides, when I was young I had one, and he was hardly there for me. I would deal with it. I would work with it. I would do whatever I needed to do. But I would never marry just to give her a father. I was witness to the marriage of my parents and had vowed against anything like that. I had come too far along my way to gamble on such an emotional crap shoot. No matter the opinions of others or how much my father would "lose face" in the presence of his peers, I had to live according to my ideals and his codes didn't apply to me anymore. The feudal codes of the Japanese culture didn't transplant well in me, and my rebellion took on the fervor of the Civil War.

I wonder about the "old before" and the "new now" and feel my memories belong to a totally different person, that all those memories of discomfort and anguish are not a part of who I am now. But now, my avoidance lasts only as long as I let it. Now I can see past the pain and trauma of growing up in an alcoholic family and work with what I have. Now I can find solutions instead of blaming everyone else for my downfalls, the way I did when I was younger. Now I wake in the morning and actually feel good and I'm glad to be alive. That was something I rarely felt when I was 15, or 17. I'd like to be able to let my daughter know that there is a way past any pain, that 17 is not forever, and that change is a part of growth that is full of choices.

I also ask myself from time to time where and how my values have come to exist in me and I can't pinpoint any one place or time. It's all an accumulation of different things from different times in different ways. Cultures have merged, and there's no distinct line between beliefs as there was when my parents were young. I know they are laying in me somewhere, asleep like a purring cat curled by the parlor window. Let's wake it and see what happens.

Every now and then, when I wonder about this path I'm on, or my mind denies or clouds my memories, that dark corner still tugs at some indescribable part of me. The feelings that flow from there are often hard to define, but now at least I know that I am feeling. And now I know how to try and understand them.

Monument Valley / Bonnie Lisa Pestana (opposite page)

Westwinds 44
Orange M & M's

A man clenches a bag of M & M's and sits on a rusty park bench somewhere in Central Park. Dark clouds circle above him like vultures as they gush out rain all over the city. His dark trousers and trench coat cling to his body like plastic wrap, suffocating him. Beads of water drip from his hair and fall onto his eyes and cheeks. Every drop of rain that strikes the pavement thunders into his ears as if they were the notes in one of Chopin's nocturnes.

Slowly, one by one, he eats the M & M's. He cringes as he hears the candy shell crack in his mouth and when the tiny pieces travel down his throat to his stomach, scraping tissue along the way.

An icy Autumn breeze numbs his hands just as he's about to eat an orange M & M. He looks down toward his hand, shivering and turning a pale shade of blue, and notices the orange M & M. He pauses and places the M & M back into the bag. He shakes the bag, looking for a yellow one, a green one, a brown one, or even a yellow one, but nothing is left except orange ones.

With both hands, he wipes the rain from his eyes and cheeks and reaches for his back pocket. He pulls out his wallet and takes out a photograph. His eyes glare at the photograph while droplets of water slither down the surface at two second intervals. It is a picture of him. He has a woman wearing an orange dress in his arms. He notices how her dark hair rested gently against her shoulders and the way her light brown eyes sparkled in the candlelight. Her lips framed a perfect smile that seemed to light up the whole picture.

He sits with the picture in his hands for hours. The street lights around him start to dim as the faint light of the morning sun begins peering out from behind the buildings. Hesitantly, he begins to tear the photograph and watches it float down to the pavement. He looks at the tiny pieces below him. Portions of her face are scattered across the ground, but he can still make out her eyes and her smile. He grabs the bag of M & M's and empties it onto the picture. Dozens of orange M & M's fall to the ground cracking from the impact.

He looks below him and sees the orange dye from the M & M's bleed into the pieces of the photograph from the falling rain. He waits for a couple of minutes and then stands up, raises his arms to the sky and stretches his tight muscles. He straightens his coat, pushes his bangs back and starts walking down the walkway without looking back at the park bench or the picture.
Untitled / Trisha Loo

Westwinds 47
It was a typical sunny Sunday morning when Frank, Ted, and I boarded the converted school bus for church—First Baptist Church—Beckley, WV. The bus driver, honored many times before the church congregation for his faithful service over the years, was usually silent, only nodding slightly as we passed by, grabbing a handful of cheap candy, an offering meant to lure the souls of unsuspecting children.

Already in high school, we weren't your typical riders. We converged on our domain, the back seats, and started throwing candy back and forth, when the old bird appeared before us like a judge, clad in an out-of-fashion suit and expressionless face. Both were wrinkled, worn from regular use over countless Sundays. He spoke to me directly, singling me out as the leader.

"Either tell me who did it, or none of you ride on my bus again."

"Sir, I don't know what you're talking about."

Ted, laughing out of control, said,

"Why don't you just come out and say it?"

Flustered, the old man spoke up,

"Who's been showing themselves out the window?"
Reflection

K. Maunakea-Kanemihailua

Today, in a light drizzle
I stood face to face
With a Hawaiian man
That looked like me, but...
Something was missing.

"Sistah, you get one dollah?", he said.
His eyes were masked, glazed.
Looking past me
Without Aloha.

His shirt was the kind from Swap Meet
Had one Hawaiian on steroids
With one helmet and spear.
The shirt had 'WARRIOR' on top.
They sell Hawaiian Pride and dignity
On one T-shirt.
Too much.

I remember one time
Seeing one political cartoon.
The Hawaiians looked like midgets
With kinky hair and fat lips.
The W.A.S.P. was scolding them
From his desk high above.

"How come you stay in the rain?
Why you no more slippahs?
Where your 'ohana?," I asked,
As I fumbled in my bag for change.

He never say nothing.
I gave him two dollahs and
He still never say nothing.
He just when turn and go
To the next car.

March 1994

Untitled / Trisha Loo
Extinction: Redefined

Ross K. Cummings, Jr.

A world where everything is weightless, peaceful and tranquil. It is here that the world's largest living creature claimed its dominance, under the seas, oceans and waters that cover the majority of our planet.

I can recall the days when the spouts of these creatures covered the oceans like a transparent blanket. The creatures then were so abundant, that the few we took had no effect on their population.

Man's technology would be the downfall of the creature's existence. The machinery, weapons and lifestyle of the whaling fleets brought wealth and fortune to all who took part. Man's greed was great and his machinery and weapons even the greater; the great creatures of the sea were destined for extinction. Year after year, the creatures' numbers dwindled, forcing man to create more efficient, larger and faster ships. The technology was incredible, vessels used sonar for eyes, eyes that were capable of locating the creature within a thousand mile radius from the ship. The speed of these ships far surpassed that of the fastest sea creatures. The armament aboard was that of a futuristic battleship, equipped with harpoons capable of blowing a hole through six feet of steel. These floating islands of doom had the capability to digest even the largest creatures in a matter of minutes. The machinery was so efficient and the take was vast.

Inevitably, the whaling industry dwindled along with its product. The abundant whaling ships that covered the waterways of our planet were gone, along with the creatures that made the business. Gone—every last one gone.

I was captain of the last known whaling ship. All the other ships have vanished or have been forgotten. For over half-a-century now, I've been sailing the seas. The sea was my reputation and many referred to me as the founding father of the whaling industry. I and my ship have processed many of the giant creatures, hunting them and pulling them up out of the water; it was much like picking roses in a rose garden, but this was long ago. The last rose I picked was about a year ago, a medium sized blue whale, the largest known breed of the creature. A female I believe, with the lightest complexion I've ever seen in all my years stalking the creatures. Eerie sight, she had the complexion of a ghost, but surely a blue.

All the hunting grounds were empty. My last resort was the Devil's Den, located in the most harsh environment known to man. Many have ventured into the Den losing everything, their lives and ships, and none have returned. Many tales have been told of this Den. Some say it's a sanctuary of the creature, a place where they flourish in great multitudes. Others regard it as a graveyard for all vessels that journey into its portals. After sailing the sea for a year without a single bleep on the sonar, I had to take the chance. The Devil's Den was my final option for the chance of one last hunt.

The Devil's Den was a week's sailing from my previous position. As I entered the inlet to the forbidden sea, enormous icebergs surrounded my vessel forcing me to halt. I ran to my main gun, which was located at the bow of my ship. All of a sudden the icebergs receded from my ship, clearing a passageway that looked like a liquid runway. I gazed out over the spectacle and saw nothing, no spouts, no waves, no creatures. Over the horizon, I noticed a giant wave. It was on a collision course with my ship. As the wave drew nearer, I noticed the eerie ghostlike tint within the wave, the same tint I had encountered with my previous victim.
almost a year ago. With that white glowing tint approaching my ship, I closed my eyes, and the huge wave slammed into the bow of my ship, knocking me unconscious.

I awoke to a strange sight, one I've never encountered before in my life. I was all alone in a giant underwater cavern. I walked to the end of the cavern, where I noticed that eerie white tint. As I reached the end of the cavern I found the source of the eerie glow and nearly fainted in astonishment.

I had entered a chamber, where I found the answer to the eerie glow. There in front of me was the largest whale I've ever seen in all my years of hunting the giants. The cause of the eerie, mysterious white glow was the complexion of the creature's surface, which was a white, almost glowing pigment covering its entire mass.

The giant chamber consisted of four walls made entirely of coral. On one wall I recognized pictures of ships, thousands of ships that had been missing for years. On another wall, harpoons and various other weapons used in the whaling industry were displayed resembling a massive trophy case. The wall directly in front of me had a giant chair in front of it, 150 feet high and 50 feet across. The creature was sitting upright upon the chair. I further examined the chair. The backrest was lined with giant kelp, seaweed and various ocean flora. The seat itself was a giant cushion made out of human flesh, sewn together to create a comfortable seat for the huge creature that sat before me. I, for the first time in my life, showed fear of the creature that I killed so freely, for I was now the victim.

The giant creature looked at me, with giant black lifeless eyes, the type found on a child's doll. He took a deep breath to clear his drenched lungs before he spoke. His voice was very low, sounding like the bellow of a gigantic toad. He stated why I was there and explained the reason. "I've been hunted since my birth almost a century ago, my brothers, sisters and race are all gone, destroyed. I'm the last of my kind, since your ship destroyed my mate a little over a year ago."

The creature raised his pectoral fin towards the wall behind me. I turned and saw a gigantic picture of a female blue. I recognized the picture as the victim of my last hunt, even in the picture she possessed the eerie white tint.

"I have had many battles in my time with your floating isles of death and have created a museum of all of man's failures," he said as he motioned to the walls within the chamber. "I have found sanctuary here, many leagues under the sea. This chamber has been my shelter, home, and den from all men's evil. Now I'm old and tired, and must find the path taken by the rest of my race. It is said that you are the most experienced in your field of execution, and that your ship is the strongest ever created. You will be my final battle. That is why you are here. With death, I will find the peace I once had, and again be united with my family. I will find the special sea I've been searching for."

After his final words, he pushed off his gigantic chair with a surge of energy produced by his huge flukes. The pressure from his departure forced me to the ground. As I stood, I found myself once again standing behind the main gun on my ship.

A white tidal wave approached my ship from out of nowhere. The largest blue whale ever seen by man jumped out of the wave, suspending his enormous mass in mid-air with his mighty flukes. I recognized the giant from some foggy space in time. The beautiful creature, in all its glory, centered itself directly in front of my main gun.

I stood behind the gun and froze. The creature sensing I would not shoot, created a
high pitched shriek that mysteriously activated the gun trigger mechanism, sending a great harpoon into his blubbery flesh. The creature fell into the water, a bloody mass, unlike others who fell to the harpoon. In his suicidal ceremony, the creature didn't struggle, cry out, or show pain. The bloody mass just slipped into the sea.

The area surrounding the bloody mass magically began to glow, in the same white eerie tint, but this time the glow was much brighter. It was a glow equivalent to a liquid sun, and the sight was one of beauty. As the glow faded away, sorrow touched my soul, my life, and everything I worked for.

The water once again began to glow, brighter than before and I smiled. This was the last gesture of a mighty race. I felt he was thanking me for what I had done. It was all clear now, he found life in his death. His peace, his family, and his sea were given to him with a shot of my harpoon. Now, in his special sea, he can live in peace and harmony for eternity.
My car twists and curves.
    Route One winds past
    Old Maine country towns.

There! On the radio. There It is again!
    One day sale on frippery.
    Grandmother called them that -
    Furbelows, frippery.

Gewgaws and gimcracks - dusty
    Seashells and brittle pinecones
    By Gran's Tiffany lamp
    On the curly maple nightstand.

Crisp doilies on marble tabletops,
    Family pictures in burnished silver frames,
    Kewpie dolls and crystal Christmas angels,
    Too fragile for a summer attic.

Knicknacks and bric-a-brac - her old, pink
    Cameo, sweet lavender sachets, one son's
    Bronzed baby shoes, a chipped ashtray
    Molded to some child's chubby left hand.

Now my life has no place
    for this dust. No words
    for clutter and stuff.
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