

*Dominican College 2014*

# Bang & Whimper



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Whispers of the Mystic—A Lyrical Ballade  
By Daniel Roncace

The wild woman came to me,  
as I walked along the ocean;  
lost in weary absurdities.  
She came to me with a notion:  
“Hey, you there, come drink my potion”  
She enchanted with her whisper,  
and in one quick and curious motion  
I sipped the Mystic’s elixir.

Euphoric greens near the Peach trees,  
falling from a golden eve sky,  
lingered about in the sugary breeze;  
the Earth spun as I sat by  
gazing upon the calm night-time  
Suddenly, I heard some whispers  
in ancient cryptic rhyme—  
I sipped the Mystic’s elixir;

and then, I thought, I understood!  
Melodic chants I’ve never known  
sounded from the dusky wood  
where secrets like great stars shone.  
I wandered and I felt alone,  
but again, I heard the whispers;  
answering in their minor tone,  
I sipped the Mystic’s elixir.

The wild woman spoke to me  
In a strange foreign whisper,  
and all onlookers would agree,  
I drank the Mystic’s elixir.

The Moral of the Story is...

By Ikea Poole

Living the lives of mortal beings with immortal expectations, immoral reputations.

Embarking on a soulless journey,

traveling far beyond our ambiguous needs, taught not to believe in the things we believe, Being unfaithful to our fate and scribbling over our destinies.

We take no president in our beliefs,

facing the consequences of damnation not thinking before we speak.

Where the devil become your best friend and God becomes the enemy, vanity become beauty, ignorance becomes knowledge and fallacy becomes reality.

In this world we have all become sexual sadist, psychologically sadistic unholistic, naturalist survival of the corrupted.

Where the sadomasochist egotistical adulterous submissive, sons of the richest bastards control much more than the government.

Framing the American Dream but inside is the depiction of a nightmare, where they, deface the names of the slaves they forced into their bureaucracy.

Burning the American flag in the name of Christianity, in the name of democracy isn't that the definition of hypocrisy?

Cinematography camouflages the idiosyncrasies of human beings disguising the malicious behavior of who we are secretly.

But in actuality we are homophobic homosexuals, civil racist, holy atheist, moderate republicans, born again prostitutes, vegan cannibals, and righteous murders.

Neither confirming or denying the questions but not providing an answer.

Ask them no questions and they will tell you no lies because why themselves no longer know the truth.

We continuously search for false prophets to guide us into heaven, use them to extinguish the flames of hell unbeknownst to us that our souls are already a blaze. Not realizing that heaven is only 3 blocks away and the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

We have created our own version of genocide, sterilizing those that don't fit into our exaggerated facades of life.

We have mutilated our own self-portraits to where we no longer recognize who we are.

Who am I?

Who are you?

Who are we?

Just a bunch of blank faces staring into a mirror waiting for a sign but there is no sign!

They said the revolution will not be televised and this still remains true today.

This revolution will not be televised, this life will not be televised, this will not be televised. NO this will be live so what are you still looking for!

Live

By Nicki Welton

Everyone in this universe looks at life a different way. We are all so different that we have different perceptions on how we portray the way of living. Life is good but life can be over within a second. That's why we have to take everything for granted and appreciate everyone and everything. Everybody should live life on the edge at some points. You have to come out of your comfort zone and do something you've never done before. You have to experience life at all angles and ways. Be a wild child for a change. Buy a plane ticket for you and a friend and travel somewhere you've both never been. Take pictures. Lots and lots of pictures. You'll be happy you did once you get older and you can look back at all your great memories. Smile and be happy. Life is so precious that we shouldn't waste it on being upset or angry. Life has its mysterious ways and can do wonders for people. In my book, everything happens for a reason. People come in and out of your life. Some are meant to stay and others aren't. There's a way for everyone, and you can't search for it. It will come to you. You must live your life being open; never judging anyone for anything. We are all different in our own weird ways, and that's what makes life so special. Be happy in whatever you do. Happiness is all that matters in life.



Photograph By Britney Schoonmaker

Untitled  
By Melody Scudrato

I am lost,  
Day after day.  
For I do not know who I am,  
But I am trying to find myself.  
Lost in a sea of tears,  
A river of sorrow,  
I almost wish not to see tomorrow.  
Is that a selfish desire?  
I am just forever un-inspired.  
Left tired, it's easier to sleep and not wake,  
However I will not give in to Fate.  
For I will rise,  
I will be found.  
Lost only temporarily.  
The Phoenix will live forever unbound.  
Arise, set fire to those broken dreams!  
What is life but a series of fragmented screams?  
Times of peace often broken,  
I am left feeling nothing but pain.  
I could spend eternity just searching for a way to make it right.  
Instead time is spent obsessing over modern machines,  
Where is the personal connections I yearn for, is it in vain?  
The world is evermore a maze,  
Nothing concrete, my reality is often a haze.  
Determined to make something of this life,  
I shall not be conquered,  
Yet, this feeling of being lost persists,  
Day after day.

The Final Crush  
By Anthony Peterson

I wondered her name  
The girl with the eyes  
So that is what I call her  
When I asked for her  
Everyone played dumb  
As if they've seen eyes like hers  
They are not blue or anything  
Though they are enchanting  
Spaced perfectly apart  
She has looked at me before  
I wonder if I am the boy with the arms  
I think if I could borrow her eyes  
I could look into a mirror  
To see my reflection from the inside

#243

By Mardochee Julien

Last night, I asked her on a scale of one to I love you, how much do you love me?  
She smiled and said I love you  
No numbers can keep up with how many beats my heart skips when you hold my hand or how desperately I  
want to kiss the fright from your lips when you scream  
She repeats I love you  
Even when you don't want me to  
She moved the hair from my face and with a crooked smile, she asked me how does it feel?  
How does it feel to be pushed into a closet, how could you feel uncomfortable in your own home?  
How fucking tragic?  
To be so young but to be so depressed  
To be alive but feel so dead  
I reached to touch her and she grabbed my hand and said "you don't get to don't that"  
The vibrato of her stern voice disturbed my eyes and I began to cry  
She took my hand and placed it over her chest and she asked does this feel like a secret to you?  
Is my beating heart too loud for you?  
Because I can't stand to walk in public and look over my shoulder every time when my heart sings tunes  
to your soul  
I am sick and tired of sneaking kisses in the bathroom  
The stench of the lies are starting to make me feel queasy  
I am exhausted of being called your best friend because if we are just friends explain the 344 days I spent  
turning my glass slippers into stain windows, so that the colors can reflect how beautiful our love is  
And I just fucking hate the two hundred and forty two poems you wrote about me that say "him"  
instead of "her"  
My name is Nicole, not Nicholas  
I have a vagina, not a dick  
If you can't accept that, why am I still here?  
What are you so afraid of?  
Cause I can't play coaster to your half empty soul  
You can't drag me out of love's cold war and refuse to clean up my battlefield because my scars look more like  
a vagina  
And have you ever seen two kids in love?  
The stench of their impulses reek underneath their gunk of horny adolescence  
They cannot keep their hands off each other  
Scratching below the surface  
Leaving their wounds open, they swap spit and when they kiss  
You can't help but to stare  
LET THEM STARE!  
Their opinions are just funhouse mirror reflections of how jealous they are of our bravery  
I was brave enough to love you down your spine  
Just be brave enough to love down mine  
She kissed me and she asked me again, does this feel like a secret to you?  
Let our love create lightning and thunder because when it finally rains, it'll be fucking beautiful  
I grabbed her hand placed it over my chest

My voiced crackled like my lungs were collapsing and I said  
When I'm with you I can be myself if that's any consolation  
You're still my favorite poem I've ever written and I love you  
Just because the world doesn't know, doesn't mean I don't.  
You're where my heart is black and blue  
Sometimes love hurts  
But I love you.  
I love you like all the metaphors I ever wrote about loving someone like I love you as if love did not exist  
till we did  
My heart is your firefly  
It's just locked away in a jar you keep underneath your pillow  
So my soul can glow whenever you start to feel lonely and you're the only one I trusted enough to poke  
holes in the lid, I can finally breathe  
I've met my soul mate  
I just don't understand  
Why would God create such a beautiful human for me and then forbid me to love them  
My love for you is authentic  
I just wish God would care more about my happiness than who I sleep with  
But the problem is I care who I sleep with  
They'll punish me for it  
That's the problem with this world, whenever someone is different, we try and change them and if we can't,  
we punished them for it.  
I rested my head onto her chest and I listen to her heartbeat  
Her hear beat patiently  
She was patient with me  
But her patience is weighing thin  
She whispers  
I can't be your midnight snack if I don't get my Monday morning coffee  
I won't do the walk of shame if you can't deal with the moment of truth  
I'm too broken for this and when I'm with you I'm starting realize how lonely the number two is  
And I can't be your secret anymore  
I am not afraid of rejection but it hurts when I'm the only one who knows you come home to me  
I loved you enough to cut the most fragile parts of myself and to put them into your hands that shake,  
shiver and tremble  
But you don't love me enough to expose surfaces of your soul I've explored  
You want to be rational about your decision but there's nothing rational about love  
Cupid did not make a mistake  
God did not make a mistake  
If God did not love gays, why would he create rainbows?  
These poems are starting to get old  
So please, write poem 243 & if you love me, say it's about me  
Because the world deserves to know how crazy we were about each other.



Photograph by Joseph Key

For Landscapers  
By Patricia Ramella

I once had a neighbor named Sean.  
I hired him to mow my lawn.  
Came in to get paid,  
ended up getting laid.  
Didn't know he was married to Dawn.

Their faces reflect off the clouds in the sky; their laughter a breeze that flows through the treetops and grass. Visions of what I once had and of what has taken it from me have driven me forward through the heat of a sunny southern day and the chills of a desolate desert night. The memories of my children's soft embraces and my wife's serene smile have kept my soul afloat but only one vendetta has brought me 2,300 miles to these dusted roads of Soledad, California. I'll see to it that they will be quenched with blood before sundown.

A nearby mining tavern is where I start my hunt. Inside was just as dry and dust covered as the streets outside. Miners in tattered clothes, drunks wallowing in their own self-pity, and bar maids hiding their nervous sweat under tight corsets were scattered in corners and around the bar. The green wall paper chipped and fluttered to the floor as I stood looking at the crowd. This place disgusted me, these people disgusted me, but one of them knew where the man I longed for was. The door clapped shut behind me.

"Listen up!" I said. "One of you knows where Augustus DeLeon is—"

"What business do ya have wit' Augustus?" said a crusted miner to my left.

"Do you know where he is?"

"I might."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know what kin'a business ya be haven wit' the Sherif, but don't be comen inta this town looken fer trouble. We don't need men like ya comen here an' stirren the pot.," said the miner. My lips crawled and stretched, my fingers itched as I kept them firmly by my side.

"I don't mean any y'all harm. I just need to have a talk with your sheriff. Do you happen to know where he is?"

"He should be at the collections house by now. He usually meets with the gold collector by two," piped up the bartender. With a tilt of my hat in his direction I exited the tavern. Chatter immediately arose from the hive of patrons. Satisfaction played on my lips, I had their attention.

A piece of shit this mining town was. Peeping stares met my gaze as I made my way into the tumbledown collection house. These people didn't know how to keep their eyes closed as they hovered around hitching posts and sidewalks. Only a few men eyed me with concern but most passed over my intentions.

"You have picked a good town to run off to Augustus," I said to a robust man. Wiping his sweat-covered brow the man before me met my eyes with his own muddy daze.

"Good afternoon sir! Who might you be?" he said. I found it hard to answer. Augustus being alone in the hut had me fantasizing about my fingers reaching into his drooling mouth and cutting his tongue out. I could hear each tooth making a clatter as I collected them in a tin cup while he wailed. His Blood trickling into his eyes as I filleted his hair line sending a chill of satisfaction down my neck. The hardest is his knuckles but they would make the sweetest crack of a sound, like twigs breaking, as I bent and broke them one by one until his hands were backwards.

The clatter of a pen falling to the desk in front of Augustus sobered me from my lustful thinking.

"My name's Emery, Emery Jemison. May I have a seat?" Augustus gestured to the chair across from his desk.

"What brings a fit and healthy man like you into my office? It seems men as able-bodied as you are usually in the town cells rather than having civil conversation with someone like myself." Augustus said.

"I'm new in town." I said.

"New in town! My o' my. We rarely get any newcomers around these parts. All the gold is either claimed or run dry. I hope you're not in that business."

"Actually, I'm here—"

"I don't mean to dash your hopes. We're always welcoming new residents. Say, the election will be within a few weeks, make sure you vote!"

"I'll make sure to do so—"

"You don't have anything much important to say do you? I know it's hard to talk to an educated man like myself. Why don't you tell me where you're from, you got any family?" His chest seemed to be growing with every word he sputtered. At any moment a gold button from his jacket was fixing to pop me in the eye. Keeping my composure was cramping my jaw and causing my ears to flush.

"I'm com'n from Cassville, Georgia. I was born there." I said. Augustus let out a deep guttural laugh and slapped the desk.

"A southern boy huh? You traveled a fair piece but you made the right decision to get out before it swallowed you whole! See this here," he tugged at a silver pin attached to his jacket. "I fought valiantly for the God given glory of the great north! In fact, I paid my dues at the battle of Cassville. You probably saw me marching along the streets! Funny how small the world is, huh?"

"It's not likely." I said.

"What's that now?" Augustus leaned in close.

"It's not likely that I saw you in Cassville. I had been spending my time in Virginia."

"Now, now don't you tell me—" He began to lean back.

"I might not have seen you in Cassville Augustus, but I did hear that my dear Anne and my four children did."

"Now what are you saying? I don't know of any children." My chair clattered to the floor as I stood and made my way around the desk. I put both hands to either side of his chair and brought my face in close. He stank of whisky and lies. A cord had been struck, but I thirsted for something more.

"My Annabel! It was your face she saw last wasn't it? You were the one that made her suffer!" I grabbed ahold of a rock on the desk and hurled it through the nearby wall. "And—and all my children, my God! Edwin—Edwin couldn't even walk!" I said.

"There's where you're wrong." Augustus said.

"What?" Hot breath began to fume out of my nose as Augustus's perspiration began to drip from his chin.

"Every one of your boys was standing good and tall when I met them." I struck him hard against the brow with my fist and he toppled to the floor. Finally what I had been craving sprouted from an abrasion above his eyelid dark as wine.

"And good boys they were too, holding their sisters hands. You raised 'em right Emery!" He managed to spit out as I brought my boot to the bridge of his nose crushing the thin bone. His breathing became haggard as I propped him up against the wall with the stone embedded in it.

"You ended my life sheriff. You know that right?" I said.

"Your life ended the day you took up arms for those retched Bluebellies. Some rebellion you dumb bastard." He wheezed through the clots of blood running out his nose and into his mouth. Looking around me I found long logs of firewood and rope lying around among other things and brilliant idea had come to mind.

"Now I don't know if you Billy Yanks had ever received a buck and gag, but I tell you what, it was my Corporal's favorite." I said as I bound his feet and knees up around his arms and inserted one of the logs in between to ensure that he couldn't move. "But since you love to relive your glory days I figured this was the best way for you to go. Do you have anything left to say sheriff?" Warm and sticky his blood and saliva stuck to my face as he spat, "Very well then." I stuffed his sweat rag from his suit pocket into his mouth and bound it shut. Holding him by the log between his knees and arms I dragged him out the door and out in front of the collections house.

"I don't care what glory you had fought for, what victory you had achieved. There's no mercy for you in hell," I said between each grunt as I pulled the obese and intoxicated body that was Augustus De Leon. Without fail the wandering eyes of the miners and stray folks had found their way from their wheelbarrows and conversations to Augustus and I. "Don't fall asleep on me now. Your execution is long overdue," I said as I propped him upright and patted his face. I met every onlooker in the eye. Some looked back with immediate recognition of the situation I had placed before them, but most of their faces held utter terror. Reaching to my side I could feel the cold metal and glossed wood of my revolver as it began to hum in my hand.

"Augustus De Leon you are being sentenced to death for the murder of my wife Annabel and for the murder of Edwin, Len, Sarah, and Emily my four children. God will not have mercy on your soul!" I announced to the crowd and with a tilt of his head I placed the barrel at the base of his skull and pulled. The pop rang out among shrieks and cries and looking down I could see his life flooding onto the dirt. Each spatter made an ugly stain, just like the people and buildings, against the natural rock and dirt. Chills shocked my every nerve. What a feeling this was, a euphoria, that a weight had been lifted.

"Get him Charley!" Came a gruff shout that stood out among the rest. "Shoot that man Charley!" I looked up to see a young man no more than 20 years old trembling with a rifle in his hands. With a subtle nod I felt the searing burn of a bullet.



Photograph By Kayla Dexter

## Aftermath

By Victoria Morganbesser

The bed was wet underneath me like so many nights before. I didn't need to think before I realized the urgent scream was my own. Her eyes were half-open, but I could tell they were focused on my face. This had occurred every night since I had been home. I stood up, sick of the images that were consistently playing in my mind. "The doctor said it's normal." Her voice was full of drowsiness. She was my number one fan for a recovery, even though nobody knew if there would be one.

"That doesn't mean it really is." Nothing could convince me I would ever be normal again.

"Jack, what do you want me to say? No one has gone through this before, and we're all just trying to help."

"You don't have to say anything. And you can't help me if you don't know what I go through. That's like diagnosing a disease before ever asking the symptoms." The sigh that escaped her lips was frustrated. We never used to fight.

"So tell me. Help me see it. Please, I want to help you." So much in her voice was exactly what I had heard during combat. How was I supposed to tell her that I would never condemn anyone to the things I had seen? People talked about those of us who went away coming back with no emotion, but there wasn't room for it.

"What do you want me to say? I wouldn't wish anything I saw on my worst enemy." Her hand brushed the scar hidden under my shirt. Since I had been home, her hand found that same spot a million times. Similar to a child, returning to the same questions again and again, waiting for the right answer. Every scar has a story, and mine was one for the books.

"You were different, before," she said. Easier to love. The words were written all over her face, but she refused to say them.

"What am I supposed to do? You want to hear the stories? I'm damaged. Do you want to be too?" Betty had always been there for me, and it was hard to talk to her like this. I remembered being with her before deployment. We would talk all night, and I watched her eyes twinkle and her dimples show whenever she laughed. It seemed so long ago, when it had really been only a few months. Her eyes didn't sparkle, and her smiles were forced now.

"Tell me, Jack. What did you see over there? How did you get that scar?" Curiosity peaked in her voice, something Betty had always been good at. When she was interested, you had her full attention.

"I saw evil, Betty. Things we could have never imagined happening. It was horrible." I closed my eyes and a million sights rushed back to me. Rows of lifeless bodies lay out in front of us. Hundreds of faces, but never any names. I pulled the shirt from my body, revealing the scar on my stomach. The gasp that escaped her lips was familiar to me. All of the nurses had done similarly as they were trying to fix me up. Deep and infected, it had taken months to heal. It was now a painful reminder of what had happened over there, and I was one of the lucky ones.

"This—people did more of this?" She said, hushed. You did more of this. Her blue eyes were full of judgment, as though I had had a choice.

"That's not the evil Betty. Scars are just a part of the battles. I can't describe to you what I saw, you wouldn't believe me if I told you. Evil has many definitions."

We couldn't save them all. We tried. We gave them food, but...their stomachs couldn't handle it. They were dying from overeating.

"Why can't you just help me understand? I just want to help you! Don't you want to get married? Don't you want to have a family?" The more questions she asked, the more uneasy she became. She was finally realizing. Thirty years old, we were supposed to have a family. We were supposed to grow old together, and go dancing.

"You think I want to be like this? You think I don't want to have a normal life? A regular job? I'm not trained to do anything but fight in wars. I lost the best years of my life, and what do I really get in return? Shipped back into society as useless as I was before!" I closed my eyes again, envisioning those I had tried to save.

"Entire families had been wiped out." My eyes shut, and I saw faces of people who I would never meet again, but would see over and over again.

"Families?" Like ours. Theirs no longer existed, and ours never would. "Who would do something like that?"

"Who was doing it didn't matter Betty. What mattered is that is what people are capable of. That's the world we'd be bringing kids into. I can't handle that. I can't allow you to stay with me in hopes of a normal life. I can't be normal, and I will never tell a soul what I saw." Behind my eyes was nothing. I was dead inside.

"People always thank me for my service. They don't realize how much of me is still over there."

Betty's eyes were focused on my face. "Jack...what are you saying?" Betty had aged since I had left. Not in the obvious ways. She had worry lines, and this sad look about her. So different from the girl I had known before I had left. I was the cause of her pain.

"I'm saying that I'm damaged. I already told you." I couldn't expect her to understand

"I'm damaged too. I waited for you. I got newspapers every day. I heard the people were dying. I kept thinking maybe it was you. But you're here. We just have to get you back into the swing of things." I was alive, but I might as well have come home in a box.

"I can't be that guy anymore Betty." I sat down on the bed next to her for the first time since I woke up. I touched her face, and she winced. She kissed me, something we both could have enjoyed before.

"I know. I knew from the minute you walked through that door you had changed. I can't give up Jack. There's too much of me invested in this already. We just have to learn to fix each other." My heart softened as tears formed in her eyes. I was behind those tears. I was making her cry.

"You deserve to be happy. You deserve a family, a nice house, someone who doesn't wake up screaming every night."

"And what do you deserve?" I had broken her spirits. She didn't have any fight left.

"I deserve to know I didn't hold you back from that happiness. I'm not going to be the cause of you missing out on your life. I love you, Betty. Always have, always will. But I can't be who you need." I kissed her forehead, something I had done so many times before. So many see you later, but this was a final goodbye.

"I waited for you Jack. I didn't move on. I sat here and hoped and prayed you would come back! Do you know what it's like to open the paper every morning and pray your lover's name isn't in there? Why can't you just let us be happy? Why can't you just stay?" The hope in her eyes crushed me, I wanted to climb back into bed and never leave. She turned away from me, her back rigid with the rage building within her. "You selfish pig. Fine, leave." Her eyes appeared almost as dead as mine. I turned to walk away, and I heard her get off the bed but before I could turn her fist was on my back.

"Jack, you are the biggest jerk I have ever met in my life. How could you do this to us? Why can't you just get over yourself? You're not even a soldier anymore!" Her screams were loud, but I could barely hear them. I was physically standing in front of her, but I was too far gone. I couldn't feel guilt like she wanted me to; I was doing the right thing. I turned to her again, as I was leaving.

"You'll know where to find me. This new guy—He'll be better for you than I ever was, I promise." I gathered my things and left without another word. Soldiers like me, we were lucky to have escaped with our lives, but we were prisoners of our minds. Betty never would call me again, but as a former soldier I understood what I had had to do: taking prisoners was only fair during the war, once the war was over you had to let them go. I may have been a casualty of war, but Betty didn't have to be.

Roads  
By Ebony Vonwolfolk

Life is moving too fast  
Fast like you had... been  
Speeding with no worries  
Turning corners in a hurry  
Not knowing what would come next of this journey

Just thinking how you were supposed to be there, get there, sit there....  
To see him, your brother, cross that stage  
To get there safe  
Moving on your own pace

Family in the audience waiting, anticipating, something that would never be seen.  
A moment that would change the whole thing.  
This thing you and I called life.

That day meant a lot to me, a lot to your family but now we grieve.  
Going 60 in a 30, over the speed.  
Turning corners that lead you straight into a tree.  
Like DAMN!  
Wondering why why... why this happen to me.

Speeding in a fast lane, no conscience to this whole thing.  
Let me take a moment to breath  
Because this is too real for me.

Straight then swerve...auto correct  
Left right left, hit a ditch and that was it.  
A scene that I imagine so clear in my head  
My tears represent the blood you shed.  
To just know that speeding is where this lead.

Texting you at a moment's time not knowing ten minutes later you would no longer be mine.  
My dearest god took two angels away that day.  
For I would never be able to understand...But I'm glad in my heart you still lay.  
Knowing you're in a better place I smile and so I say,  
Things happen for a reason, a lesson to be learned.  
Before you crash, think fast and slow down before the road is gone.

Monsoon season in India is nothing like a rainy day in New York. Water falls in sheets from the orange sky, like someone has tipped a bucket over your head and, in the interests of time, decided to dump the rest of the well for kicks. It sloshes around your feet and slides off your skin, hot, quicksilver, until it feels like rain is what runs through your veins and enters your lungs and seeps, unbidden, from the corners of your eyes when the body of your favorite aunt rests still and silent in front of you.

Sometimes you tilt your head back and just let it fall, let it tangle its fingers in your hair and run them down your arms, stomach, thighs. Close your eyes. Sometimes your mother will scold you in a tight, tired voice, tell you to cover your head with your shawl and stay indoors, and sometimes you will not listen. It takes a while to find the tailor's shop. It's not on the main road of the city; instead, it's tucked deep inside a narrow alley, where the cracked road and stone walls are grey and dull, and vendors bid promises of warm chai and soft pastries. The shop itself is hidden next to a glamorous, air-conditioned mini mall with svelte mannequins and brilliant clothing. You ignore the mall and stand in front of the shop, duck your head and open the swinging door.

It is not what you expected.

The tailor, you know, has catered to your family for decades. You'd dimly imagined a tall, intimidating figure, all dark lines and sharp angles. But the shop is small—at least, the front of it is—and swathed in bolts of shimmering silk and soft cotton. Standing in the center is the tailor, framed in color and cloth.

She's rather short, perhaps a head or so below you. She has a stout frame and round face, a form that might seem maternal on anyone else. But what catches your attention is her grin. It's almost feral, broad and gleaming as she steps forward to greet your mother, eyes crinkling at the corners in genuine pleasure and no little amusement.

Fox face, you think, and stand as still as possible. Breathing can wait.

The tailor crosses her arms over the desk and cocks her hip, her sleek brown hair falling in jagged edges over her face. "It's been a while," she drawls, and her grin widens even further. "Haven't seen you around in a long time, child. What brings you to my shop?"

Your mother smiles, eyes shining with warmth you haven't seen since the plane landed in India a week ago. "New cloth, new customers. My daughters chose two favorites, and I told them we'd save the fittings for you. You always make perfect measurements."

The tailor's gaze flicks over towards your sister, then rests upon you. You already like her, but you still have to repress a shiver. Fox face rushes through your mind like a tidal wave. You've never seen anyone like her before. "Daughters," she murmurs, still watching you. "They're beautiful. You did a good job. Alright, let's see what we can do."

She's thorough. Your sister goes first, and the tailor makes an initial set of measurements, then a second, then a third, chatting with your mother all the while with her low, honey-smooth voice. You try your hardest not to fidget, watch the minute hand on the clock overhead tick faster and faster, until your sister is suddenly at your side again and it's—

"Your turn," the tailor says, gently pulling you forward. Her hand is warm, fingertips calloused. The measuring tape winds its way around your arms, chest, waist, legs, then once and twice and three times more before it's set aside on the table. The tailor holds up one of the fabrics to your collarbone, her long nails clawing into your skin. You sneak a glance at the notepad on the desk. 34-28-38 is scribbled at the very bottom, next to a line of Malayalam that spells your name. It looks pretty in her handwriting, even if you can't understand it.

And then, just like that, it's over. The fabrics are folded and put away, the notepad resting on top of them. The tailor bares her sharp teeth in a friendly grin at your mother, their voices a soft hum amid the whirl of the ceiling fan. She swings the door open, and you step out into the alley as your mother bids her

goodbyes. "I'll send my sister to pick up the finished dresses," she says. "It'll be a long, long time until I see you next."

The tailor's fox face glows in the dim orange light. She laughs, and the sound rings out in the alley, slices through the night's silence. "Maybe, maybe not. We'll see how it goes. Until then, child," and with a broad smirk at you, she closes the door shut.

You're going to church today for the first time in months. You hate going, honestly, but it's the anniversary of your grandfather's death, and your family is obligated to attend the morning service. Your mother rushes by you in the hallway, sighs heavily at the sight of your bed hair, and urges you to wear one of the new churidars for today's sermon.

It doesn't matter much to you either way, but you oblige her and sort through the selection of traditional clothes in your closet. There's a brown one at the very bottom of the pile that you don't recognize. You take it out, untie the knots holding it together, and raise the dress up to the light.

It's beautiful, deep mahogany with sequins intricately sewn between gold and umber leaves. The shawl is made of a sheer cloth that falls in soft folds between your fingers. You realize a moment later that this is one of the outfits that the tailor made for you, the very fabric she'd held up against your skin in the small, small shop with its quiet fan. You forget where you are for a moment and press the dress against your cheek, close your eyes and breathe deeply.

It smells like heat and rain.

An Elegy for a Father's Love  
By Rebecca Moschetti

Lamenting the absence of a father's love.  
It only grows stronger as I grow older.  
Waiting for something that won't ever come.  
Daughter to father, stranger to stranger.  
Mourning the loss of something I never truly had.  
My heart is a bone dry desert, thirsting for a drop of love.  
A void that can only be filled by he who will never come;  
A silhouette of my father is configured in my heart.

Had he not been there at all, I would not feel this pain in my chest  
of my heart strings detaching and causing my heart to actually break.  
A daughter's love that was never returned and never received.  
Yearning and missing of he who was never mine, and so, I grieve.

Fire  
By Mardochee Julien

The sun crawled  
up on the  
arch of your  
back  
and I  
knew that if  
I kissed you,  
I'd get burned.



Photograph By Rebecca Moschetti

Swallow Your Pride When Whipped  
By Anthony Peterson

I know you think my pride is too much  
But I would drown my pride in the creek behind my house for you  
My love for you is deeper inside me than my pride will ever be  
I am so physically strong  
But I become so mentally weak when the thought of losing you enters my mind.

From the Damned  
By Kayla Dexter

The day that dam build began I thought I had finally gotten my opportunity to get out of the rut that was my life. Jimmy Walters was the man who picked me up for the concrete crew. He showed up at my door the Sunday after Pricilla took the kids and finally left me for good.

"You got a strong back Tom." Jimmy had told me. It didn't take much convincing for me to take the job, being in jail for three years had left me broke and begging.

"You do a good job and behave yourself and we'll pay you 43 cents an hour." We shook hands and he left.

I would see Jimmy again the next day, but this time at the dam site. He would put a wheelbarrow in my hands and heard me over to the rest of the hack line.

Bit by bit the dam grew higher and thicker as we poured the concrete. A slow job it was, but I promised a good work and I did stay out of trouble.

Months had gone by and I had made enough to feed myself and to become accustomed to the luxury of a bottle in my hand. This dam seemed to be doing some good for me until the day it wanted something in return. It was a long ten hour work day and my hangover wasn't doing me any good, but like always I had managed to not get myself fired.

A brutish man we called Ox was helping me with the last load of freshly mixed wet concrete when he clipped his foot on the side of the barrow and fell 6 feet into the concrete. When I reached down to help Ox out his flailing body and massive weight pulled me into the abyss that was the concrete.

The drying of the concrete on my poor skin sealed the sins of my life and my poor bones would become entombed next to the Ox's and there I would remain.

Haunting Reminiscence  
By Rebecca Moschetti

Memories of you corrupting my mind  
Your soft caress haunts me  
and drowns my senses.

Fingertips grazing across my skin  
Goose bumps rise wherever you touch.  
I gasp for air as I take you in

Unbidden scents;  
axel grease and cigarettes  
linger on my sheets.  
Those sapphire eyes with a sparkling shimmer.  
Translucent eyes and an opaque heart.  
Those devilish eyes and their lecherous stare.

I remember how they used to burn into my flesh.

Rest in Peace  
By Ikea Poole

As I walk through the valley of death.  
searching for salvation,  
looking for my father's footprints,  
only to find his shadow casted in the sand.  
Looking for the opening to hope,  
Only to find myself surrounded by destitute, Alluded by hallucinations and delusions Brought to my attention  
by he who brought me here.  
I feel fear creep behind me  
but I grasp the cross on my neck and tread lightly.  
Blessed is the one who holds on to the Lord, while the devil whispers the secrets to damnation in your ear.  
I place my hands in the hands of God and pray that he allows me to ascend unto heaven.  
In Jesus name I pray to never perish and gain absolution, trying to make sure that I stay sane, even in times of  
mass confusion.  
I fall to my knees and say  
\*Trust in the Lord will all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.  
It's hard to stay holy,  
because the issues with being human is that my sins over power me, causing me to be unfaithful to my faith and  
spiritual in the times when religion is all I need.  
May God have mercy on me and allow me to repent for my sins for it has been so long since my last confession,  
and give me the ability to project my words words on to my master's ears, Lord forgive me for I know not what  
I do Unknowing of the reasons behind my actions, looking for my own personal satisfaction, but in that time I  
forget about you.  
trying not to do the work of Satan but sometimes he appears as you.  
Almost sold my soul to a fallen angel  
one of God's soldiers' now gone AWOL against the lessons of the creator he who created the Heavens  
and Earth.  
He took the plunge from grace and ended up in an awful place disgraced and ashamed because there was no  
longer good associated with his name.  
People no longer praised him but shunned him and prayed to never meet him in the afterlife.  
Others lost and misguided sacrificed the innocent in order to become one of his minions, a demon free to roam  
the Earth gathering souls from people who don't understand its worth.  
Deliver me from evil and allow me to not be prisoner to my own doubts.  
I place my life in the Lord's hands  
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen

\*Prov 3:5

Evangeline  
By Erica Descartes

The brightest star in the sky,  
She lit up the night.  
Seated so high,  
With her everything just felt right.  
We moved mountains with our love.

The finest thing that walked the earth,  
She left me way too soon.  
Till this day I know her worth,  
I'm jealous of the moon.  
We moved oceans with our love.

The strongest kind of love,  
She killed me with her kiss.  
I placed no one above,  
My Evangeline; you're the one I miss.  
We moved the world with our love.

The worst pain known to man  
I lived to see her shine.  
It started when her life began  
And forever she will be mine.  
we moved mountains, oceans, the world;  
We moved heaven with our love.



Photography By Ashley Wade

Bird's Eye  
By Thomas McCarthy

Rolling along  
As dust clouds  
Trail,  
I come across  
An image so vivid  
Of nature's  
Splendor,  
I paused to gaze  
A timeless  
Moment  
That would last  
Forever  
Until the time  
I come again  
...And again  
Be amazed.

To my Heart...

I'm sorry

By Erica Descartes

I'm sorry I awake you  
From your peaceful rest  
Disturb you with these people  
Who cannot give you the best?  
I'm sorry that they hurt you  
Or even waste your time  
I thought I would be able  
To read all the bad signs  
I don't know how you do it;  
I don't know how you're so strong  
I thought I passed good judgment  
But each time I am wrong  
I can't stand to be lonely—  
I can't stand to be alone  
I realize when it's too late  
When feelings have already grown...  
That they do not deserve  
Something as great as you  
They can't handle your love  
And that my heart is true.  
I'm sorry you invested  
I'm sorry for the false hope  
I'm sorry I didn't protect you  
Because now my Heart you're broke.  
I didn't have your back  
Or brace you for impact  
I let you fall  
Now the pieces are no longer intact  
Each time you give your all,  
Each time it ends in ache  
I should've known by now  
But each time it's the same mistake  
After all the pain,  
I still cannot change  
Yet heart you still remain  
Beating fast and pumping blood  
Patiently waiting and  
Always accepting love  
Now, I need a little favor  
To keep you from distress  
Stop giving away your love  
To keep away the mess.

The Desert Queen

By Daniel Roncace

Tw'as long ago in History's past  
of cloudy sands and hoary lands,  
there lived a beauty unsurpassed,  
there lived the Desert Queen—  
Such beauty made the Nile flow.  
Such beauty amid the dark did glow.  
An Egypt of so long ago,  
there lived the Desert Queen;  
and there she sat upon her throne,  
glowing with a spectral shine;  
sitting, as the Sphinx sits now,  
forever she's fixed in time—  
I bid you not approach her though,  
charming looks be just a veil.  
She'll take your heart upon her  
and judge it on that fatal scale;  
and if you find you do not pass,  
the airy plume proves to avail,  
thy fearful gasp will be thy last;  
amidst Ammit, thus ends thy tale—  
So if you look, do from a distance;  
admire the sweet mystique.  
But never, absurd as it may seem,  
approach the Desert Queen—

Greyness

By Eileen Phillips

There were things that she forgot and things that she would forget, and who knows what they are.

These are the things she remembers.

His colored contacts made him look more like himself.

His hands were always freezing cold, but warm was his embrace.

Her hands tingled in his, and not from the cold.

That awkward first consummation, which preceded their first kiss, when she knew what she wanted, but didn't know it was love.

The sad beauty of their tears mingling as they kissed, the salty taste left behind.

A million idiosyncrasies...forgotten until their reappearance in another.

Her attraction to him was pure, fresh. Every one to follow seemed tainted by the echoes of the past; attraction not to a person, but to some small aspect reminiscent of that first love. And each relationship a disappointment, unable to measure up to that impossible standard. Once she realized it, she dwelled on the past, pondering what she could've done differently. Once satisfied that she knew what she'd done wrong and that she could do it right given another chance, she tried to find him, failed.

She was unable to regain what she'd lost and there would be no new memories. This was seven years later. Seven years...It sounds so familiar. Hadn't he said something about seven years?

They were sitting in the park, on boulders next to the stream. He had one of her hands enclosed in both of his. His hands were freezing cold and damp from wiping her tears and his own, and her hand felt tingly, but not from the cold, remember? He spoke of vengeance on him, sacrifices he'd make for her, and a curse someone placed on him that would last seven years. He said he'd take all her pain away, take it unto himself, but she'd hate him for it. She said that was nonsense and didn't he ever get tired of spouting all this cryptic bullshit? She said she loved him and always would. He just smiled sadly and shook his head softly, the corners of his eyes becoming wet again.

Maybe there was something to his words after all.

She wonders if he's happy. She wants that for him. He deserves it. He held her up when she felt so low and she kept looking down instead of looking at him. Their love was this bauble, something taken for granted.

While he tried his damndest to keep it sparkling, she let it rust, until it was too tarnished to gleam anymore. If she could just see a glimmer of it yet...maybe things would be different.

All she has now is words. Words on the back of a photograph. Words remembered. Words scrawled in a yearbook. Her own futile words, trying to capture the depth of emotion that died with their relationship. And she loves him still, though it matters not.

