Tidepools
2006

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Mr. George
“Come on, it’s time crawl under the house to find those newborn kittens, and get ‘em tamed,” Grandpa said. “We won’t be able to catch a bunch of wild cats after their eyes are open.”

He had a box with some dry grass ready for them. We could hear the blind kittens mewing in a far dark corner under the house.

Our sun-baked bellies felt the cool dry dirt as we slithered along like snakes under the house. As our eyes got used to the dark, we saw spiders scuttling from their webs. I got goose bumps.

“Hurry up in there,” called Grandpa, “Do you see those kittens?”

“Yes, we’re almost there,” yelled my brother.

“What are those things Freddie?” I said, pointing to green jellybean shapes, dangling from floor joists under Grandpa’s house. All the beautiful jellybeans wore a crown of gold. My mind began to spin in wonder about our discovery.

My curiosity about the jellybeans kept my attention for now.

“Grandpa, Grandpa! What are those green things under the house?” I kept insisting as we handed over the kittens. Grandpa, in his high-bibbed overalls, with salt-and-pepper hair poking out from under his favorite tin hard hat, smelling a little like a cigar and horeshands, asked what we were talking about.

“Look here in the crawl space hanging from those boards, Grandpa.”

Bending down to take a look he answered with his Portuguese accent, “Those are chrysalis,” he said, his stern black eyes giving us a questioning look.

Chrysalis — that was a strange word to my brother and me. Freddie and I couldn’t stop talking about what we saw under the house and a few days later our curiosity took us back. It was moldy smelling under there. We lay in the dim light, quietly staring at the beautiful jade green chrysalis when one started to jiggle. Something was starting to emerge. As we watched wide-eyed, something wet wriggled free. We lay there a long time as it began to dry out and slowly unfurl its wings to reveal a colorful pattern of orange, black and white. After a time of slowly fanning its wings, it magically flew off, leaving us speechless.

“It’s a butterfly, a butterfly!” he exclaimed excitedly.
“Come on, I have an idea. Meet me at the Chickapen tree out by the smoke house with a gunny sack and some rope, and hurry up!” I ordered my seven-year-old little brother.

Freddie arrived all out of breath. “Now what?” he demanded.

“See those two limbs way up there?” I said, pointing. “When we get our sacks tied to the limb, snuggle down into your sack, hear?”

“I don’t want to. You’re too bossy,” he mumbled. “Just because you’re nine, you think you know everything.”

“Shh! Hush now. Hold that sack up higher so I can tie this knot.”

“That looks like a dumb gunny sack tied to a tree limb,” he said.

“It is. Now climb in.”

“What!”

“Like this,” I said, ignoring him, as I snuggled into the bottom of my gunny sack.

“Now what?” came Freddie’s muffled voice from his sack.

“If we sit here quietly in our sacks long enough I think we could. . .”

Woosh!

The bottom of my sack gave way, and I hit the ground hard. When I woke up, my little brother was there patting my face frantically, “Are you OK?”

I was feeling dizzy. My head hurt and my lip was bleeding where it had snagged a sharp branch.

“I am so mad,” I said, in tears, “I wanted to be a butterfly.”

Holding my bleeding lip, I ran to the house crying to Gram for some Pomo comfort (Grandma was a Pomo Indian from northern California) with Freddie at my heels.

My brother started to tell our grandparents all we had been up to. This time when I looked up at grandpa, he didn’t say anything. But he raised his eyebrows and his eyes seemed to sparkle. His mustache twitched, I think hiding his smile. My little brother never quite forgave me for not becoming butterflies.

Arlene Zornes
Sunrise on Port Angeles Harbor

Rosalie Kaune
Hot Summer Day at Salt Creek

Jeanne Engesath
Bowing Woods
Backlit, Tufted Saxifrage
Priya

For nearly three years I lived in Malaysia, working as the Director of an academic program for Malaysian students who wanted to transfer to the U. S. for university degrees. During that time I was housed in a flat supplied by my employer as part of my compensation. I arrived in Kuala Lumpur to start work about four months before my wife who had stayed home to settle up all the details of relocation. My second morning there, still deep in jet lag after 26 hours of air travel, I slowly realized that there was a sort of rubbing sound at the entry. As was customary for someone of her status, Priya’s knock was so soft that when finally I heard it, I wondered if it was a knock or a small bird brushing its wings against the door.

When I opened the door, there she was, almost immediately reciting her prepared speech; that she was the maid of my predecessor in the flat, that she would keep it clean, wash my clothes, and shop and prepare my meals, and not be a bother. And if I did not hire her, she would have to kill herself. Still dulled by jet lag, I was a little slow in processing this. My first response to her was, “Er, ah, if I don’t hire you, what method will you use to kill yourself?” She brightened considerably at this, apparently taking it as a normal opening question for a job interview, and just the kind of information any sensible potential employer would want. Hesitating just enough to demonstrate serious consideration, she shyly responded, “I will hang myself.” Hanging always seemed to me to be one of the less messy and more considerate forms of self-annihilation so I was favorably impressed. I had previously lived in Asia long enough to know when I was confronting fate. Her answer seemed to me to be one of the less messy and more considerate forms of self-annihilation so I was favorably impressed. I had previously lived in Asia long enough to know when I was confronting fate. Her answer seemed to me to be one of the less messy and more considerate forms of self-annihilation so I was favorably impressed. I had previously lived in Asia long enough to know when I was confronting fate. Her answer seemed to me to be one of the less messy and more considerate forms of self-annihilation so I was favorably impressed.

Priya was a Tamil Indian, like about 10% of the Malaysian population. She was about five feet tall, child-sized and wise-child in deportment, given to bursts of enthusiasm, secretiveness, followed by full disclosure, fanciful schemes, and bi-polar shifts from regret to optimism, all in dizzying speed.

Three weeks after my introduction to Malaysia and Priya, an old friend of mine, Tom, visited on his way back to the U. S. from India. Tom had been three months in Kerala, revisiting Indian friends and surroundings that he had known during the 60’s. Priya was Malaysian born, had never visited India, and cer-
tainly never met and talked to a white man who had revisited India. During his stay, Priya would arrive extra early to fix Tom’s tea, see to her chores and have ample time for serious discussion with Tom about Indians and Indian diet and Indian deities. I would slip away to my office hardly noticed and return late in the day to verbally exhausted Tom, and triumphant Priya discovering India through the experience of an old hippie from Wisconsin. She had grown up the sixth child in a Tamil family, speaking Tamil, eating Indian food and celebrating Indian holy days, but hearing it all from a Wisconsin Lutheran was a richer cultural experience. And it wasn’t all a one-way cultural exchange. Priya in great detail regaled Tom with the current affairs of the American show, “Dynasty,” which was then a big hit on Malaysian TV. So the Tamil explained “Dynasty” to the American and the Yank explained Hindu cosmology to the Tamil. Months after he left, she would wonder aloud when he would be coming back.

**

Priya was distracted from concern about when Tom would return by a business opportunity that came her way. Another Indian Malaysian, Miss Desai, a Math teacher, was one of the faculty working for me. Miss Desai was looking for someone to stay with her invalid mother during the day. Priya came to clean for me three times per week (all of the cross-cultural cleanliness I could absorb). She meticulously teased out a schedule whereby she could balance my needs for hygiene and Miss Desai’s mother’s need for companionship. I was impressed by her scheduling skill and encouraged her to close the deal. The last thing I wanted was an unhappy Priya sighing from room to room plus a distracted Math teacher. It was to everyone’s advantage; Priya would have more income, Miss Desai’s schedule would have eased, Mom would have had a chatty companion, and I would have heard less about everyone’s problems. With much head waggling, the two of them discussed, negotiated, got on famously, nailed down all the details of duties, conditions, and times. They had it all worked out, right up to the point where one of them had to say a number, set a price, mention money. Each was so fearful of being financially exploited that neither could toss out an opening wage. Each wanted the other to go first. Neither would. Nothing happened. Neither got what they wanted because each was dead certain that they would be financially beaten in the bargain. The deal fell apart.
Priya slid off the gory horns of responsibility by asking me to salvage the deal by setting a price for the two of them. Balancing the pocket books of two Indian women was not part of my already overloaded job description. I easily and truthfully plead ignorance of the nuances of the local economy. Now that I was the one queering the deal, Priya cheerfully accepted the collapse of this ill-fated enterprise and graciously forgave me for not being able to deliver the goods.

**

Though there was no sport of boxing in Malaysia, the championship matches televised via satellite were very popular throughout Southeast Asia. I think this modern interest started with the Muhammed Ali – Joe Frazier “Thrilla in Manila.” It was only by living in Southeast Asia, and specifically in a predominantly Moslem society, that I came to realize just how famous and revered Muhammed Ali is throughout the world. Among many non-white populations, both Moslem and non-Moslem, Ali is considered a true holy man who has sacrificed for and lives by his religious faith. Like much of the Malaysian population, Priya was a great fan of both televised boxing and WWF wrestling matches. Aside from “Dynasty,” boxing and wrestling were her favorite television programs.

The championship boxing matches which were scheduled for late-night viewing in western nations, popped up via satellite in late-morning television on the other side of the earth. Both Priya and I would adjust our work schedules to accommodate “the fights.” I would go to my office early, leave for an “early lunch” but actually do a bunk and slide back home to get a front row seat at the telly. Priya would arrive equally early to get her work out of the way, glowing radiantly in anticipation of ritual violence and, with any luck, blood letting. Together we watched one of Mike Tyson’s bouts, and one of the Thomas Hearns–Sugar Ray Leonard matches. Actually she found boxing a pale imitation of WWF wrestling. At the outdoor food stalls in the evening in downtown Kuala Lumpur, all of the hawkers would have their portable TVs tuned to World Wrestling Federation telecasts. Even after a couple of years there, it remained for me a surreal experience to walk into a field of hawker stalls and see tiny multiple images of Hulk Hogan for my viewing pleasure as I munched on satays and sipped cold Anchor Beer. There is no substitute for controlled violence for bringing people together in the global village.

**
When I lived in Malaysia (1987-1990), more than 2000 bomohs were registered by the government as qualified to practice traditional medicine. Probably as many practiced without a license. Bomohs are traditional healers who use incantations, spells, herbal medicines, and supernatural methods to treat ailments. Even sophisticated Malaysians would mix-and-match modern medicine and traditional healing as they saw fit. Priya frequently complained of various illnesses and thought she got more results from the bomohs she frequented. The Malay concept of “semangat” or soul substance was just part of the “common sense” view of many Malaysians, whether they were Malay, Indian, or Chinese. Belief in magic and mysticism was definitely an active part of Priya’s common-sense experience of the world. She hadn’t read any South American novelists but she lived full time in a world of Magical Realism. I never tried to disabuse her of this perspective though I am void of the sensibility necessary to enter that world. But for Priya, life in a wholly rational world would have been intolerably drab and hopeless. We each just silently pitied the other’s short sightedness.

Actually I was spared many of the details of her medical problems, but my wife, Mary, always heard more than necessary. In today’s nomenclature, Priya believed in full transparency. Like a skilled boxer, she could employ the geometry of the shared space to eventually trap you in a corner. You entered the kitchen at your own risk. From such encounters, bit by bit, we learned much of her life. In a culture that worships the ideal of the extended family, she was essentially estranged from nearly all of her family. Only one sister ever visited or spoke with her. When her most piously Hindu brother went on a walking pilgrimage and collapsed of a fatal heart attack, Priya took unseemly pleasure in his passing. She had been the family’s youngest child, and the darkest in complexion. This earned her the family nickname, Darkie. As in most multi-racial and officially “color-blind” societies, the darker the skin the more dubious the status. A determined psychologist could find rich ground in her childhood family experiences for nearly all of her ailments, including her struggle with “the fun.”

As was normal to a female in her situation, she married young. Numbers were not of great interest to Priya, so we never knew just how young. She married an Indian who had converted to Christianity. In keeping with the motif of her life, the marriage was a disaster, even by the standards of her status. As she ultimately told my wife, Priya couldn’t “have the fun.” This was her euphemism for sexual intercourse. For reasons physiological, psychological, or medical, or all three, she couldn’t “have the fun.” Needless to say, the
marriage was no fun for anyone. Very quickly Hubby fell into a pattern of prolonged absences from Priya. At some point, (chronology was not Priya’s narrative strength), she did the sensible thing as an inhabitant of the realm of Magical Realism. She went to a bomoh to be cured so she could “have the fun.” She chose a female bomoh who lived in her neighborhood and was already familiar with Priya’s background. The bomoh listened to Priya’s description of symptoms, her medical and personal history, went into trance, and discovered by her bomoh methodology that the prognosis for “fun” was not good. The bomoh determined that Priya was cursed. She had been cursed by the Christian sister of her husband. The sister hated Priya for marrying her brother. The sister had gone to a “Black” bomoh who, for a professional fee, cast spells on the unknowing. Priya’s bomoh discovered by her own magic that the “Black” bomoh had created an effigy of Priya and had ritually sewn shut the genital area of the effigy; then the sister had thrown the effigy into the ocean near Malacca, where it sank and can never be found.

So Priya gained the knowledge that she is cursed and can never be cured. Her bomoh, not wanting to send a patient away hopeless and empty handed, gave her a potion to drink.

Priya soldiered on making the best of a cursed life. The husband came and went, living with Priya sometimes and living in east coast Malaysia at other times. Then, the husband who had taken a job as a security guard, dropped dead on the job. (The Malaysian cuisine, delicious though it is with heavy reliance on shell fish, palm oil, and coconut milk, packs a cholesterol-rich punch). As is the custom in an equatorial climate, the body was speedily prepared for funeral and then cremation. Priya was a widow.

As a widow, she naturally expected to receive her husband’s possessions. But strangely, perhaps magically, after his cremation she had nothing of her husband’s except what was in her house. Somehow, perhaps magically, even the clothes he died in, the wallet and credit cards he carried, all disappeared. No one could tell her where they were. Where was his “estate?” No one could say. It was a mystery she could not solve.

In desperation she turned to various acquaintances to help her solve this mystery. It was still unsolved when she first appeared at the entry door and walked into our lives. At last, Vikram, another Christian Indian who was a Professor teaching in my program, took up the quest. He, having professional status, unlike Priya, could question the husband’s employer, the husband’s friends, and government officials. He pieced together another magical tapestry. The story that Vikram told me and Mary was that the husband spent his
secret life in the predominantly Moslem province of Terengganu. There, the conversion-prone fellow became a Moslem. There, by provincial law, as a Moslem he could legally marry a second wife. By Sharia Law, (the Koran-based legal code for Moslems in Malaysia), all inheritance naturally and legally passed to the Moslem wife. Though Vikram could tell us, the uninvolved foreigners, he could not bring himself to tell Priya. For reasons that made sense to Vikram, Priya, having no legal recourse as a non-Moslem, was better off not knowing the legal-rational truth. Since he, understanding Priya’s cultural baggage far better than we foreigners, could not bring himself to tell her; we, knowing far less and knowing nothing for a certainty, did not tell her either. For better or worse, we, Priya’s friends, left her carrying her curse and her mystery.

When the time came for my wife and me to permanently leave Malaysia, we actually spent about a minute thinking of taking Priya with us. A minute was all we needed to realize this was a fantasy ending that could never work. We knew, even Priya knew, that she could not live in a culture devoid of magic.

We said goodbye at the door where she first told me her need for employment and her preferred method of suicide. As she left I put an envelope in her hand. She left in tears and in the time it took for her to round the corner, count the ringatts, and run back, she returned to bless us for that much money. Maybe money can’t buy love, but it sure can ease the sweet sorrow of parting. I swore her to secrecy about how much money I had given her. Other Malaysians would have thought less of me for being such an easy mark and/or immediately started scheming of ways to part Priya of her windfall. Now she was in a perfect Priya-mix of sadness and elation; still sad to leave us but already dreaming of the magical changes to come.

Priya’s life is a perfect jumble of true need, real problems, dramatic self-indulgence, profound sadness, and child-like joy of living. She lives way out on the edge where most of us dare not venture. Like all of us, she is impractical, but on an operatic scale. I do not know what came of her, but I can not imagine a happy ending for her. That is the big difference between her and me; Priya can imagine a happy ending.

*Lawrence Tyler*
Marcie woke at six. She always did. Ever since she started school at five years old, up at six. Now she resented the automatic alarm her body sounded. She rolled over, covered her face with her pillow and squeezed her eyes shut. No good. Her hearing seemed super-sensitive. Every creak of the old house, each chirp of the sparrows outside, seemed a drum beat. She had to get up.

In her blue, turned gray robe and slippers, she began the ritual: make the bed, turn up the heat, put away dishes, feed the canary, get the morning paper, make coffee, throw out yesterday’s paper, pull up the blinds, all the while wondering why she bothered. One day she would break the routine, sell the canary and ... and what? That was the problem. Marcie had no idea about “and what.”

Sun tried to break through the St. Louis smog, a bilious light. Marcie poured a cup of coffee and took the paper to the kitchen table. She closed the blinds. She didn’t want to look out. She wanted no one to look in.

She sipped coffee. The paper lay unread. War, murders, accidents, loss of jobs, she wouldn’t read the paper. She’d read these stories before.

Maybe Carl would ... what is wrong with me? There is no Carl. Carl’s gone; passed on, go ahead say it, DEAD. What would Carl have done today? Go to work of course, but she had no work to go to, so that was not the answer to “and what.” Why don’t I just do what I did, clean, cook, wash, garden, shop? I was happy. Why? But why should I? Another question, “and what and why should I?” This was too much. Marcie’s hand shook. Coffee slopped unnoticed onto her robe.

Maybe she’d call her mother. No, that would just mean crying, an insistence that she should not be alone, come home, be treated like a child. No, she would not call her mother. Jeannine, she’d call Jeannine. No, that would mean pasting on a smile and she wasn’t up to that. There was something she had to do today. What was it? It was important. She knew that. It couldn’t be put off. Maybe if she got dressed, she’d remember.

Marcie plodded upstairs. She stared at her clothes. Black slacks and blouse would be appropriate, she thought, though she was not sure why. Tossing robe and slippers on the floor, Marcie turned on the shower
to a hard, hot spray. She stood unmov- ing under the water, as unexpected tears mingled with the shower’s stream. She remembered what she had to do.

Marcie dressed slowly, tied her long dark hair back with a red ribbon, found her purse and went down- stairs to wait. Ten o’clock. When was she supposed to go? She didn’t remember. She sat on the bench in the hallway, hands folded. She’d wait. It didn’t matter. She peered across the hall, to the small empty bedroom. Why were there paint buckets and tarps on the floor? There were boxes too. One box said Fischer-Price. Against the wall was an unassembled crib. Curious. The grandfather clock tolled eleven. Still Marcie sat, hands folded, sat and stared. The boxes, the paint taunted her. Another question, what was it all for? Like a mantra, over and over, the questions insisted: and what, why should I, and now, what is it all for? Numb, still, and cold, she sat. The clock struck noon. Marcie jerked to awareness. “I’m waiting,” she thought. “Who am I waiting for? When is he coming? He? Yes, it’s a man, perhaps an official of some kind.”

Marcie stood and went to the kitchen. She turned on the tap, letting the water run over her hands. Rivers, she thought about rivers. The canary sang to the sound of the water. She reached for a glass and filled it. She sipped the water slowly. “I’m waiting. I need to wait. He’ll be here soon.” Marcie shivered. “A coat, I need my coat.” It was another problem. It seemed a weight too heavy to carry to get her coat from the hall closet and walk back to the hall bench to wait. Immobile, she stood by the sink, shivering. The clock sounded one o’clock. The doorbell rang, and rang again. Someone was pounding on the door.

“Good,” Marcie thought. “I don’t have to wait anymore. She put down the water glass. How long had she held it,” she wondered. She staggered to the door, and leaned a moment against it, before opening the door.

“Mrs. Langston, I’m Sgt. Donelli, we talked last night about the accident. Are you ready to go?”

“Yes, we spoke. I, I need my coat. It’s there, in the closet.” She sat down on the hall bench.

“Mrs. Langston, are you alright? Let me get the coat for you.” Sgt. Donelli got her coat, and gently helped Marcie put it on. She swayed as she led her out the door to the waiting police car.

“Do you have your house keys? I’ll lock up for you. Mrs. Langston? Mrs. Langston, your keys?”

“Oh, yes, here, in my purse. Look in my purse.” Marcie sat, hands folded, in the front seat. Donelli locked her front door, returned her keys to her purse and fastened her seat belt. Marcie sat, sat hands folded.
Donelli was worried. He hoped she'd be more responsive when they reached the station. He was no expert on this kind of thing. Though he'd been on the force for five years, this was a first for him.

They drove in silence. Donelli pulled into the parking lot beside the station. Marcie sat, hands folded, until Donelli helped her take off the seat belt and get out of the car. Marcie leaned on his arm, as they climbed the station steps. Inside he helped her fill out some forms. She followed his instructions. It seemed to Marcie that she was a puppet, read this, arm down, sign here, arm up, stand up, go here, sit down, wait here. That was okay, because her mantra filled her mind. Nothing else mattered until she could answer, “and what,” “why should I,” and “what is it all for.”

Now Donelli led her to an elevator, and pressed the button for the lower level. The door clanged open. A medicinal smell assaulted her. Donelli was talking. She had to focus. Maybe he could help answer her questions. Maybe the mantra would stop. What was he saying?

“Mrs. Langston, now all you will need to do, is look through the window at the body and confirm that it is the body of your husband. You do remember that he was found in his car, and the car had apparently gone off the highway into the Mississippi. The coroner says he probably died three days ago. I want to warn you, he looks pretty bad.”

“Yes, I know. Now, I know. What if I can't tell by looking through the window at his face? Can I get closer? Can I go in?”

“You will be able to see him clearly. He is covered with a sheet. You can see as much as you need to. Of course, there will be an autopsy, before you can claim the body for burial. We think it was an accident, but ...”

“Yes, yes I know ... I want to know. Let me see him, please.” Marcie stood quietly before the window. Her arms hung stiffly at her sides. She was cold again. She read the sign above the window: Morgue. Her mantra returned. She waited. Suddenly, Marcie recognized the drone she heard as Sgt. Donelli’s voice.

“Is this your husband, Mrs. Langston?”

Marcie forced herself to look, to focus. Carl, yes it is Carl. Was Carl, no longer Carl, but yes it had been Carl. The mole in his left eyebrow, the chicken pox scar on his chin, both were visible, in spite of the bloating and discoloration. “Yes,” she said, “that’s Carl. That’s Carl Langston, my husband.”

“Okay,” Sgt Donelli called through the intercom. “It’s Langston. You can put him back on ice.”
Marcie slumped to the floor. A sudden warmth flooded through her. She felt light headed. “On ice, I’ve been on ice,” she thought, “and now I’ve melted.” Rivers of tears poured down her cheeks, drenching the collar of her blouse. “Rivers,” she thought, “Carl died in a river. Rivers. I was thinking about rivers. I am crying rivers.” She waved Sgt. Donelli away saying, “I’m okay. Just let me sit a minute.” She placed her hands on her belly. She felt a kick, and then another. Marcie knew now the answers to “and what,” “why should I,” and “what is it all for.” Rivers keep on going, and so would she.

Marilyn Pollock
Writer’s Dementia

As I lay wide-eyed in bed staring at the ceiling, I desperately try to maintain a grip on my last shred of sanity. It’s been four days since I last slept and I fear the insomnia isn’t going to subside as I had hoped. I glance at my daily checklist:

“2 Valiums, check.”

I move further down the list,

“1 Xanax, check.”

Last, but not least,

“1 Prozac, check...”

I stare at my list baffled as I try to summon up a rational thought as to why my medication isn’t working. Frustrated and anxious, I decide to leave the comfort of my bed and make my way to the typewriter at the other end of my apartment. My feet touch the cold surface of the hardwood floors and I recoil in fear as I feel something furry brush across my foot. I let out a brief yelp of surprise and look to find that the source of my fear is nothing more than an old sweaty sock. “Calm down, Ryan,” I say to myself as I desperately try to catch my breath. “Nothing more than my mind playing tricks on me.”

When my terror finally declined, I continued to my rusty typewriter. I lit up a cigarette and took two long drags before typing the phrase, “Revel in the fact that you are capable of compassion, but take no pity on me. Destitution builds a strong soul.” I carefully reread my words, “Garbage,” I mutter.

The writer’s block I was suffering from only worsened my situation. One phrase away from completing my novel, this is where I had been for the past month. The frustration produced anxiety which no medication could cure. The novel was a story about a man that loosely represented my own persona; he even suffered from the same sleeping disorder as I. Borrowing events from my life I constructed a story of deception, love, hate, murder, good, and evil. The last event in the story is the main character losing his sanity, killing his neighbors, and coming home only to aim his revolver at his wife. Scornful and incoherent, the main character has grown to hate everything, including things he once loved. In my original ending the main character realizes the horrors he has committed and decides to spare his wife and turn himself in. The thought of that ending disgusted me and seemed to lack any kind of creativity.
I sat in my old recliner, contemplating an appropriate ending while polishing my revolver. Five o’clock in the morning, the sun was rising. My lack of sleep paired with the stress began to give me a chronic headache. I knew I couldn’t sleep without finishing my book. To make the ending good, I also had to make it realistic.

The door’s locks began to rattle and shake, the hinges slowly creaked open as my wife stepped in. “Ryan”, she said, “why are you still awake?” My wife had been on vacation in Hawaii for the last month. I was supposed to go with her, but I stayed to complete my work. “Just getting some work done,” I stuttered in a disoriented manner.

She moved closer to examine my face. “How long have you been awake?” she asked with concern in her voice. “You really should be sleeping. You’re sick, remember?”

“I’ll sleep when I’m done with my book, dammit!!”

“Ryan, listen carefully: there is no book, you’ve been sick and suffering from delusion. The doctor says you need to avoid stress or your condition will worsen.”

“What do you mean, ‘no book’?”

I rushed over to my study and examined my pages of writing, but when I looked, the pages were blank. She couldn’t be right, this had to be a trick. I had put too much time into this project. It couldn’t just be a fantasy. I turned around with incredible speed and aimed my revolver directly at my wife. “Where is it, you bitch!” My skull was throbbing; I couldn’t see straight, the room was slowly becoming a blur. My wife pleaded, “Please, put the gun down, you’re sick.”

Overwhelmed with confusion, I frantically searched for a logical solution that would ease my mind. Perhaps it was just some cruel joke that she was playing or maybe I was just dreaming. But as I gripped the cold handle of my revolver I instantly realized it was quite real.

Suddenly, two officers rushed through the apartment door and pointed their guns at me, “Ryan Flyke, you’re under arrest for the murder of John and Karen Jamasak.” My wife began crying, “No Ryan, not the neighbors.” I recoiled in horror as the memory came back to me as clear as the sky. It wasn’t writer’s block I was suffering from, but rather, writer’s dementia. It was the harsh truth, I was a murderer.

My life’s greatest work, nothing more than a psychotic delusion brought on by my condition. I was
nothing more than a horrible monster that had committed atrocities violating all ethical principles I had once held dear. My wife was becoming hysterical, “Please, give yourself up. Let them help you.” Is this how the saga ended, was I also doomed to mediocrity? To just give myself up and let the police incarcerate me in some asylum.

Then it came to me, the words flowing from my lips as if I were programmed to say them, “Revel in the fact that you are capable of compassion, but take no pity on me. Monsters such as me possess no soul.” With light speed reflexes, I raised my revolver, placed the barrel in my mouth and pulled the trigger. Complete darkness:

The Perfect Ending.

Kristopher Dyche
The Walk

Lucy lived in a little white adobe house on the edge of the desert. She was eleven years old and every evening, she would come into her yard and take the broom and sweep the walk.

It was her favorite broom, the one with the flexible straws. There was a lot of dust in the yard. It flew up from the desert, and even though there was a fence around the yard, it flew into the yard. Sometimes the wind blew it in, or a dust devil crossing the desert jumped the short wall and went across the grass, sending dust into Lucy’s small yard. Sometimes it seemed that the dust fell from the sky. But it was everywhere; it could have come from anywhere, any direction. There was desert all around.

The house was on a national wildlife refuge and it was in the middle of nowhere. It was in New Mexico on the edge of a bosque where sometimes whooping cranes came to rest and feed. Always there were sandhill cranes. Once there had been as many whooping cranes as sandhills, and maybe more. Now, only six had been seen in a long, long time. Lucy had seen one once, from a long ways away, and in that she was one of the rarer persons alive today.

Outside the small yard was a larger green lawn, kept up and watered by the maintenance man. On that lawn grew a large cottonwood tree one hundred feet high, and in the tree lived an owl. Lucy could hear it hooting often late at night, and she was fond of it. It was a great horned owl, and a large one. Its hooting comforted her and put her to sleep in the humming of the great starry empty desert night.

One year there was a baby owl that fell out of the nest too early and it screeched around the base of the tree for days while the old owl fed it. Lucy’s sisters chased it around and around the base of the tree trying to catch it until her father warned them to leave it alone.

“We can’t save it,” he said, “The mother is feeding it. If you keep bothering it, she’ll stop.”

When they cried and complained that it would die, he said, “Something will kill it on the ground, or it will learn to fly. It has to find its own way. We can’t save it.”

For days, whenever the old tan station wagon drove by the tree, Lucy would look out the window to see if the owlet was still huddled there. And for days, there it was at the base of the tree, calling to its mother with a wickedly curved beak. The beak that seemed so cruel and yet so appealing on this helpless predator.
baby. She understood her sisters. The owl was fluffy and intelligent. Like all predators, she thought, they have cute babies. Something to love them for, since they will grow up to be killers. She felt less sorry for the owlet then, although it was miserable to see it huddled against the tree hoping for love against that dumb wood. A coyote would come soon. She stopped thinking then. She couldn’t think about what would happen, and she was on the way to school. It was a long time since she had tried to save an animal, and many dead animals gone now. She took a breath, and forgot.

On the way home a movement on the lawn caught her eye. A surprise brown flash of feathers. The owlet! He was up off the ground, flying!
Has he actually learned to fly? she wondered with excitement.
But seconds later, he landed again.
He’s down, she thought. She watched him launch himself again, fly about ten feet, and land.
He can’t fly any better than a chicken, she thought, he’ll never make it. How many nights has he been on the ground?
She dismissed it and forgot about it. It was several days before she realized she hadn’t seen him in awhile. And by then, it had been too long to save him, or to see what happened, or to look. He was simply gone. The desert swallowed him up. Maybe his half-eaten carcass was lying covered with ants under a creosote bush, and maybe he was fluttering clumsily in his own cottonwood tree now, his mother still feeding him rodents.

Lucy was only eleven, but she had known from the start that she would not know the outcome of the baby owl. Her sisters were still learning this lesson but they remembered less than she did, because they were younger than she was. They had forgotten the owl already now that it was gone.

Now it was evening. Lucy went out into the yard to sweep the walk. Sometimes she would lie balanced on the adobe fence that surrounded the yard. She could see the streaks of red against the blue sky while lying on the fence, and she could see the blue sky slowly turn to purple as the light lessened. It went out slowly, molecule by molecule, and she had to wait a long time before she could see the difference in the color from blue to purple.

She lay for a long time, lazily trying to decide at what point the blue turned to purple, and then where the purple turned to black. Then she sat up abruptly. If she waited another twenty minutes it would be too
dark. Instead she swung her legs to one side and kicked off the fence to the ground. She was careful to land with both feet on a flat spot since she had twisted her ankle once pretty badly going over this fence in a hurry. This time she landed flat and did not twist her ankle. She went over to the house and picked up the broom from where it rested against the house, next to the screen door.

Her sisters ran around the yard. They were playing a game of some kind, but Lucy was too involved in her sweeping to pay attention to the finer details of the game. They kept running back and forth, back and forth. Sometimes Lucy would listen to their chatter and try to figure out what the rules of the game were. This time she was lost in thought looking at the dust. It swept so finely across the walk in perfect curling swirls. Here it piled up against the house like a tiny dune. If she swept away that dune, she could see the foundation of the house. It looked cracked. She knew this house was built in the 1940s and that the foundation was not good. She had heard her parents talking angrily about how the house was sinking into its own basement. Slowly the sand is pulling us under, she thought.

She swept the sand off of the first concrete slab. The walk had three slabs of equal length. One touched the house and a little concrete rectangle that was a stair under the screen door.

The middle slab was her favorite. It was cleaner and smoother and had no cracks for dust to pile into. It wasn’t close to the house or to the fence. It was next to a small tree in the yard. The root of this tree had raised the middle slab up a little and that was why it was cleaner. The dust couldn’t stay on the smooth middle slab. The wind blew it off, scrubbing the slab even smoother. It was easy to sweep, and it kept itself clean.

The third slab touched the brown wooden fence. The third slab was the hardest to know how to deal with. The brown wooden fence wasn’t brown because it was wooden, it was brown from being slathered with dark brown paint year after year by the YCC. Every year a group of teenagers were paid to spend the summer out in the desert sun and to do maintenance work on the refuge. Every year they painted the adobe house the same flat white with dark brown accents. It must have been regulated by the federal government that its property had to be white with brown accents. The fence, apparently, was an accent and had to be painted brown every year.

The YCC never knew how to paint and the supervisor, who was a new person every year, never bothered to teach them. Every year they painted over bird feces and dirt and old paint and anything else that got in
their way. Tom Sawyer-like they whitewashed over leaves and insects still moving and cracks and spiderwebs. And they painted latches.

The brown gate had had its latch painted over too many years to count since the 1940s. Its hinges were painted too. It had stopped opening and shutting long, long ago. So the third slab ran right up against a permanently closed gate, but there was a crack under the gate—a slight crack. And through that crack there at the edge, between the slats where the wood was wearing away and the paint couldn’t reach, the sand came in. There the leaves got caught, the cottonwood leaves that crumbled to dust in the fall and added to the grit and the mess of things caught under the fence. She could never get it all out. There would be dead bees and feathers and a drop of white paint and labrador retriever hair. There would be bits of mouse hair from something disgorged from an owl’s gullet and the dried stems of cottonwood leaves like the spinal columns of skeletons left long after the rest of the body is gone. Digging under it with a broom would probably add broomstraws to the nest. The gate was immoveable, and she was under order not to move it even if it were, in case snakes got into the yard. She kicked the gate resentfully. There were cracks in the third slab, and it was uneven in places, with a rough, pebbly surface. She hated sweeping the third slab. Once, digging deep into the wet early summer dirt next to the gate, she found a toad the size of a dinner plate. He was magnificent in his brown warty girth, and she was impressed not only at his size, but that she had found him undisturbed by both her sisters. Grasping his bulging belly with both hands, she lifted him like a hamburger and carried him, eyes facing forward, into the house.

Her mother was talking to someone, but Lucy was too excited to care, and she shouted, “Mom! Look at this HUGE TOAD!”

At that moment the toad made its resentment known by letting loose a stream of toad urine onto the living room carpet. Lucy’s mom, who was not afraid of amphibians, shrieked in horror only because the pastor’s wife was sitting in her living room witnessing the whole spectacle. Lucy was shooed out with her specimen unpraised and made to clean the floor. By the time she got back to the yard, she was horrified to see that her sisters and their friends had taken possession of the toad. They were trying out its abilities in the wading pool. It was indeed an amazing sight to see a toad of that size move at all, much less try to swim, but Lucy ran them off anyway. She took the toad out of the yard to set it loose in the underbrush of the desert.
“You might have trouble finding a wet spot,” she said to it apologetically, “but you’ll do better than in our yard, now that the girls know you’re there.” She had seen it before, mostly with garter snakes and lizards, and once with baby rabbits. They would harass it, play with it all afternoon and then want to put it in an aquarium with some dirt and a bowl of water. It would starve there for days unless someone set it loose when they were at school. She thought of the time she had shown a tiny frog to her pet rat and the rat had eaten the frog. She shuddered and dropped the toad in the desert.

Back in the yard still thinking of the toad and the owl and the whooping crane and other creatures she would never see again, Lucy flexed her broom against the middle slab. She was practicing her swing. She swept with short bursts, hitting the dirt sharply so that it was struck rather than swept off the walk.

That’s how professionals sweep, she thought to herself fancifully, and then tried to remember where she’d seen that done. Probably by a janitor or a maintenance man, she decided. She was just finishing up the middle slab, and the whole walk was clean. Even the cracks between the slabs were clean, although they troubled her because you could keep sweeping dirt out of them indefinitely if you tried. But they looked pretty clean, she decided.

Just then a squirt of dust spewed across the walk. Her sisters were throwing dirt on the walk! They were kicking dirt on the walk! She ran at them. She brandished the broom! She yelled, but she didn’t have to yell. They ran from her the second she took a step. They ran off giggling and screaming and went around the side of the house. A second later they peeked around the corner, one tousled mass of sun-bleached hair and mischievous eyes.

So...it was a game.

Experimentally, Lucy swept the dust they had spread off of the walk. The younger girls came running, their brown legs flashing, their closed fists full of dust. They called encouragement and bravery to each other as they jumped clear across the walk leaving dirt in their wake like tiny airplanes spraying crops. Lucy ran at them with the broom; they squealed and yelled to each other in mock fright “Amy run!” and “Katie help!” and ran away.

Lucy began sweeping again. This time they crept along the side of the house and kicked dirt all over the walk by the door. The dog had dug a hole there to keep herself cool. There was a lot of loose dirt there and
they kicked it with their tennis shoes, spraying dirt against the side of the house, all over the step, everywhere. Even into their socks, then when Lucy turned, squealed “Amy come on, she’s coming, run!” “Katie, come on!”

Lucy imagined she was a slave on a plantation like the one she had read about in a book. Her sisters were the young mistresses of the house and they forced her to sweep, then spent the afternoon tormenting her. She squared her shoulders and set about sweeping the walk clean once again. Once again, the girls rounded the corner and dust was kicked. Lucy was at the other end of the walk and she allowed it this time, lost in the fantasy that she would have to sweep her whole life away.

“I’ll find a way to escape,” she murmured. “I’ll run away. Moss grows on the north side of the tree. I’ll go north.” Then she looked around. “I’d better imagine a forest,” she thought, “I don’t think any moss grows at all around here.”

She bowed as if under the blows of a whip as the girls ran close to her, tossing pebbles and dirt clods, then ran screaming away as if some dragon was in hot pursuit. Lucy, failing to be much of an adversary, continued sweeping as peacefully as a monk. She was past playing.

This could have gone on for hours if their mother had not come into the yard.

“Thank you for sweeping the walk, Lucy,” she said, instantly bringing Lucy back to the twentieth century, “but why are the girls throwing dirt all over it? Stop that, you two! I don’t want dirt all over this sidewalk!” It was very dark and the walk was clean. Her mother wouldn’t let any more dirt be kicked. It was time to go in.

Lucy turned to go back into the house. Then she saw it. It was just for a second, a flash out of the corner of her eye, but she was sure. In the quickly darkening twilight, two shapes huddled together on one of the top branches of the big cottonwood tree. One, a great horned owl. The second, a smaller copy of the first. Two purple-black silhouettes like tuber lumps on a potato, like warts on a huge toad, was all it took to make Lucy inestimably happy.

Leslie Copeland
A Long Way from Iowa

It was cold, a Japanese December. Low gray clouds promised snow. Much of Japan did not enjoy central heating in 1966. Shivering, I swallowed back a rising sense of nausea, and, reminded of my pregnancy, nestled into the shoulder of my husband. I tried not to fidget on the hard wooden bench that served as tourist class seating on this train rattling along towards an unknown station near Mt Fuji. It was a long way from Iowa.

My husband was a Navy pilot deployed to Iwakuni, Japan, a city south of Hiroshima on the Inland Sea. To me, a twenty-one-year-old bride straight from the campus of the University of Iowa, our little home on the edge of a rice paddy was, at first, exotic and romantic.

Sliding shoji screens divided the paddy house into three rooms, two carpeted with tatami, woven rice straw mats. At night, we snuggled on our queen-sized futon, whose non-traditional, oversized measurements made its Japanese seamstress giggle. We had running cold water, no hot water taps. An enormous cast iron kettle of water, simmering over a briquette fire, served as a bath and an evening’s recreation as we splashed away the day’s dust before a restful soak in the steaming water. But winter came. With its chill, and my unexpected pregnancy, my enthusiasm for this strange land and her people had begun to wane.

We had five days leave and had gone to Tokyo, happily anticipating the central heat, the innerspring mattresses and the steaming showers of The Sanno, an American military officers’ hotel. Cheered by the home style comforts, we had decided to take a day trip to Mt. Fuji, the ethereal mountain much revered by the Japanese, who affectionately call her Fuji-san.

“Hai! Hai!” Yes, yes punctuated the ticket clerk’s Japanese at the Tokyo train station. We had asked for tickets to Mt. Fuji. Knowing that “hai” could mean “yes,” or “maybe,” or even “I don’t have the foggiest idea, but I’m too embarrassed to tell you,” also meant we only knew our round-trip train tickets would take us somewhere in the Japanese Alps, hopefully to Fuji-san herself.

The signs on the platforms of Japanese train depots were written in kanji pictographs; below, in the corner, were the transliterations in small letters. We hoped our eyes could pick out the name of our destination, because the high-pitched, lightening-fast words of the conductor were no help to our ears.

We had changed trains in an outlying village. This rickety train with its straight-backed benches and cold, green vinyl floor had replaced the sleek express train, plushly upholstered seats and gray carpet. The
well-dressed, polite city passengers were replaced by rougher country dwellers. Equally polite, they, too, kept well away from the two round-eyed strangers. We were *gaijin*, foreign and unwelcome.

The train lurched, then stopped. The conductor shooed us off the train. We were there. Looking about, I stepped onto the platform. Threatening clouds shrouded any mountain views. The few curved roof houses were almost hidden from sight, sheltered in gardens surrounded by high stone fences that concealed the owner’s property, much as the Japanese hid themselves behind a wall of politeness. A tittering pair of school girls, gloved fingers daintily covering their mouths, bent together as they scurried away down the cobbled streets in the mouse-stepped gait peculiar to Japanese women.

The depot was the only place open to us. This provincial, isolated island nation had no love of foreigners. The familiar sewage odor, drifting up from the street *benjo*, seemed worse that day. “Why don’t these people have real, underground sewers like we do?” I wondered out loud.

“Same reason they put soy sauce and seaweed on everything they eat,” my husband answered. “Wish they had real milk, too, and not that yellow *miruku* soy milk.”

“Rice. Always sticky white rice,” I groaned. “Why not mashed potatoes?” Most likely there would only be green tea for us in the depot.

Except for the station master and his wife, the train station was empty, and I was glad. There would only be the papa-san and mama-san to talk about us; I had heard *tak’san ok’san* too many times. Big missus, indeed! We would be on the next train to The Sanno Hotel!

The mama-san clucked about her work, sweeping the dirt floor with a rice straw broom. Her rusty black hair was chopped into a bob. A heavy black sweater, torn and unraveling at the elbows, buttoned snugly over her rumpled pink shirt dotted with turquoise and black ducks. Gray knit pants, thick white *tabi* socks and worn wooden geta, resembling our rubber thongs, completed her ensemble. She never stopped moving. Her rounded form reminded me of the Rhode Island Red hens my Grandmother raised for eggs, but I decided I wouldn’t like her, anyway. I really didn’t like her husband.

He squatted in the corner, a small, thin banty rooster man. Thick black hair poked out of a rolled watch cap and sprouted from his leathery ears. He pinched a stubby cigarette between his fingers, taking quick drags through his narrowed lips. His eyes never left our faces, but they didn’t focus. He scowled. I knew he didn’t like me, either.
The nausea was coming back. I saw the makings for tea behind the counter, but hesitated to ask. The nausea was becoming insistent. I could feel its cold dew on my cheeks.

“Konnichi wa.” I ducked my head with the tentative greeting. “Ok’san, o-cha, dozo?” Missus, tea please?

Mama-san’s head bobbed as she agreed to make the tea. “Hai, dozo. Chotto matte kudasai.” Yes, please, it will be ready soon. She lifted her head, looked at me with glinting black eyes; a slight frowning between them signaled a question. I heard okusan and kodomo, missus and child, in her words. Her eyes lit up. Reaching out, she patted at my stomach, whispering the words, “Ok’san, baby-san!”

The rooster man erupted from his crouched position. He darted about the room, gesticulating at a metal stand pipe that rose from the dirt floor and exited through the roof, small holes dotting its length. A metal handle was at the base. Producing stick matches from his beige wool pants, he ignited a fire inside the pipe, and we felt the beginnings of warmth.

Mama-san brought a steaming cup of tea and put it in my hands. She hovered nearby, concerned, soft eyes willing away my discomfort. The papa-san continued to fiddle, impatiently, with the stand pipe and metal handle. Suddenly, tiny, perfect smoke rings began to rise from the small holes.

“Smoke rings!” we exclaimed.

At the sound of our voices, Papa-san triumphantly whirled around, and, seeing my delighted face, his smile broadened to a nearly toothless grin. He had made a Mother happy.

No longer gaijin, I was somebody’s Mother. The baby inside me had bridged the cultural distance between us, and we became Mothers and Fathers and children. Like children, we delighted in the showy halos, trying to catch them in our hands as they floated around our heads. Papa-san poked his crooked forefinger into the circles, and we all laughed as his misshapen ghostly rings, dancing in the air currents, filled the room. The room warmed, and, too soon, it was time to leave.

Nearly forty years have passed since that cold day. The child I carried is now grown, married to her own Naval officer. I never knew where we were that day, but I do know one thing: Iowa wasn’t so very far away, after all.

Emily Evans Larson
Bus

Shadowlike, the final inhalations of their cigarettes follow the riders of the bus inside, saturating the air with carcinogens. In four months I have found that every rider has a story. Each story explains how they ended up here in Port Angeles instead of dead or rich or famous or in jail. They sit and peddle their stories, retelling them endlessly as the bus rolls on. They long for sympathy - for a stranger to share in their onerous grief.

“He left me,” a young woman murmurs desperately. “Wanted a girlfriend and meth more than his own child and a wife who loves him.” The weight of her words drifts like windblown fog over the empty seats surrounding her weary body. It slowly begins to settle, when she adds with a sigh, “At least he didn’t press charges for the time I set his hair on fire.”

Andrea Farrell
Death Is

—if for Emily Dickinson

If she’s right,
dying is a wild night
and a new road,

but what if
it’s eternal midnight
and a dead end?

Or two a.m.
with cops all over
the highway?

Or high noon
at the crossroads
with Robert Johnson?

What then, Emily?
How do we ever get out
of Amherst?

Jim Fisher
Phantastic
Leafy Jewels

David and Shawna Burrows
Spinning in Clay

Kathy Cunningham
Recollection of the First Time

I remember the first time.
I hold my father’s hand,
His large dark calloused worker’s hand
cloaks my small dark child’s hand.
We approach the sanctuary, we and
the autumn sunlight climb the solid stone steps.
He walks slowly to let me keep up with him.
I am seven.
He is 39,
but parts of him have lifted on the docks
and the warehouse.
These parts are much older.
Though he is the adult
and I am the child,
I speak for us.
We go to where the polite finger points:
down the hall, large double doors to the right.
I translate for my father, Papi, el corredor...
I know, he says, in English
to let the polite finger know
that he understood and
to remind me that he is
still my father.
We enter and my breath and mind
stand still.
Here is where
I will enter paradise,
discover mysteries,
question love,
survive loss,
escape harm.
A polite voice explains
that since it's the first time,
there's a limit of two.
(Only two!)
A polite hand gives me the card
with my name
and my father's signature.
Clutching the treasure
I turn toward the nearest case
lost among the books
to which I am now entitled.

Janet Apolonia Flatley
Art

On the blank, white page of college-ruled loose leaf,
the burning orange tip of a cigarette
leaves only a small hole—
On my skin,
it is monstrous
and holds the moment
you told me it wouldn’t hurt,
steadying my arm too firmly,
tender side up,
betraying your promise.
My eyes couldn’t blink
when you put fire to flesh,
tears would not come—
as if you’d soldered the ducts closed,
along with melting skin
(an exchange of pain now
for numbness later).
I stood, a wide-eyed child,
biting my bottom lip to ward off
obscenities over the mark you’d made—
your face as proud as any artist:
you called me your girl,
and I turned from you in shame.

Melissa D. Cowley
A Working Class Opera

As dawn breaks up the darkness
    A symphony kindles my soul
Slowly I rouse myself from slumber
Smell the sweetness of fresh cut lumber
    As the logs play a brisk drum roll

Soon the moaning and groaning of ancient machines
    Start with a whine and sputter
Their engines join in
With the voices of men
    Greeting the day with a mutter

Now comes the clunking, and thumping and bumping
    As logs roll down their chute
Striking a cord
As every board
    Joins in melodious pursuit

This is the symphony, arioso and grand
    An opera of working class men
Performed by the mill
That sits on a hill
    The work day starts again

Linda Najera
ELWHA RIVER BAR

The river discards
what’s too heavy to carry:
scrubbed stones and old logs,
peeled and bleached,
the hip bones of an elk
resembling a mask.

A patch of sand records visitors:
tracks of coyote, deer, and, closer,
a dimple of sand
where an insect burrowed;
it flees, curiously naked,
from my probing finger.

A spotted sandpiper bent on bowing
and laughing, endlessly childlike and reverent,
left his Y-shaped prints right here;

and now,
my boot prints added,
so large and awkward,
so many miles recorded in their soles.
I look up at almost-half-full moon
discarded from an explosion
four-and-a-half billion years earlier,
but still spinning.

I’m thirty-nine in a week, or so,
twenty miles up the Elwha, again,
and I find myself
where I’ve been each year,

humbled beneath my galaxy of skin;
my naked, dust-settled bones,
cartilage, ligaments and muscles
all dancing; my femurs still slick
in their hip sockets; my river
of blood still spinning.

Patrick Loafman
Here and Now

As each last leaf falls silently
But surely from a wintering tree,
So will those scraps upon which
We have written our lives
And kept near like fires for warmth,
Pass into and fall from a descendant’s hands.
The shared-blood stranger will pause,
Amused, curious, confused,
Bending over cardboard boxes made
Frail and brittle by time, long
Forgotten in dark and musty places.
Random, questionable leavings, each
Whose faded light of meaning flickers,
Dying light too weak to illuminate even itself.
Clay ashtrays, pressed roses, posed photos,
Popsicle-stick sculptures, yellowed clippings
Will all be gently discarded, soon forgotten.
And now, those now so real, so strident things,
Our pain, our love, needs, joys, and sorrows,
And even us, our bodies, minds and souls,
Will pass to another place and time.
Hard to imagine where or when,
But certainly not here,
Certainly not now.

Christopher L. Stratton
Autumn Walk

I trace this path
ten times a week
and ever changing
   note
the subtle shift
endless green incessant grove
to a fire
without a spark or
   smoke

Dwight Barry
Guardian III

Seldon McKee
The Sleeping Saint of Nevers

I knew your face before your name;
it came to me in sleep
that looked like your death—full of grace—
so little space between the glass and
your closed lids that hide the
visions of the apparitions of
Our Lady of Lourdes.

Your young body,
flesh of my saint,
still fresh when exhumed
46 years from first burial:
put their faith to the test.
Perfectly preserved.
They reserved a place in the chapel,
said it was a miracle.
The will of God.

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception
bore witness to the honor given
by the living.
The blessing
from the other side:
eternal beauty, the ability to confound
non-believers, to make them question logic.
Chosen by godparents  
to watch over my days;  
they praised your piety and  
sought you as the governess  
of poverty and penance,  
hoped to transmit to me  
your strength in sickness,  
your capacity to see beyond  
what eyes can take in.  
They knew I shared your stars,  
hoped I might share your sensitivity,  
your will, your sense of self-sacrifice.

Sometimes at night,  
I lie on my back,  
hands clasped around a rosary,  
in a pose I have known since birth.  
Head cocked to the left  
as if to say  
*I will be at peace,  
for I have been promised.*

I see the Grotto of Massabielle,  
the pilgrims lined up  
to worship, to be healed by  
the spring raised by  
your own small fingers.
I see you dressed in 14 years of sickness, the stench of cholera in your bones, making you weak, stealing your breath as mine is stolen daily.

I know the weight that bore down upon your chest; clasping at my own breast, trying to stretch the lungs to take in more air, holy water to calm the fear of choking on my own throat.

I know what you felt when you died, the loss of fear at the end, the knowledge that the Virgin did not lie: I do not promise to make you happy in this life, but in the next.

Que soy era Immaculata Conception. You took her message to the priest; and the Order gave you the sanctuary you sought. A child visionary: the messenger of Mary. Eighteen walks as Sister Marie-Bernard Soubirous, giver of the spring, keeping the Virgin’s secrets.
You took her words with you,  
_Hail Mary_,  
full of grace. . .  
blessed are you  
among women. . .  
sighing your last breath. . .  
pray for us. . .  
at the hour of our death.
Bubba

I am eight years old. My father drives the Olds to the Bronx. My body itches with all my clothes rubbing my legs. This Sunday we must visit great-grandmother Bubba.

We climb three flights of stairs. She waits at the landing, short shrunken dressed in a long, deep blue skirt. She wears a carnelian brooch on her bodice, her silvery hair braided around her head. I hear strange sounds in Yiddish. Her eyes seem to slice through me. I feel as if I am in a foreign land.

I slowly walk into another room filled with dark, shiny, mahogany bureaus, lace antimacassars on velvet armchairs. We spend the afternoon drinking tea. We eat apple strudel, dates and apples. Suddenly I want to find a treasure to take home — something small, delicate, a reminder of this air, these spaces.
I sneak into the bedroom, search the drawers and dresser tops.
I see one of her gold hairpins laying on an embroidered cloth.
Next to the pin is a photograph of a woman and man standing in the street.
They squint at the camera from a cracked, ornate brass frame.

At dusk we leave. My father drives expertly through the darkened streets with strange names.
I nap in the back seat, clutching the hairpin in one hand.
My dreamy sleep carries me back to those rooms, their voices,
then at last I see her wrinkled face staring back at me,
slightly smiling.

_Nan Toby Tyrrell_
The Child

eyes upturned
arms outstretched
mouth open
in praise of
merciful Allah

tsings to the blossom
of brilliant light,
astonishing the
soft night sky

A miracle unseen
from the already
distant bomber.

Jerry Kraft
The Burn Patient

I don’t know how the fire started.
Alone in his ancient cedar house.
After a long life of survival
it seemed so wrong.

He’d come from the burn center
resurrected by salves and antibiotics.
Everyday he’d be rolled into the shower room
and I would rub his deadened skin
while he cried and begged for me to stop.
I chanted through his pleading,
I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry.

I didn’t want to be the one there with the old man
who had nothing to come back for.
Rubbing his skin raw beneath the spray of water,
the pink tiled room, the walls gathering steam.
The old man cried. And I had to remove myself
from myself, as though it was someone else’s
hands who did the scrubbing.

Sometimes when I drive through
Discovery Bay I look up on the hill,
wondering where his cabin had been.
I think of him and and how we entered
that world of last days.
I think of him as a child, with no one to claim him.
His people long dead, and no one came to visit,
except this savage task.

Who was I
before he came to me,
with both my hands immersed in suffering
for the healing that never came?
I imagined his life,
the one I didn’t know—
the years of weather,
and longed for winter storm.
Sheltered on the bay, no two days the same,
hillside of alder and maple in continual change.
The straight trunks taking on afternoon light
in shadow rows, and how that kept him safe
among the scarlet leaves.

I came to work and passed his room,
the bed stripped and smelling of disinfectant
to mask what happened there.
All traces of him gone.
I didn’t want to be someone
who caused pain, who couldn’t really mean
those words, I’m sorry, I’m sorry,
who couldn’t unlatch the door,
or lift the window up, and usher in
the untroubled blue sky.

Donna Morris
Mute

His tongue now a rooted vegetable
decaying at the base of the throat,
a lump he can’t swallow,
he skitters his eyes like birds
flushed out of hiding, hands

circling arguments lost
in the mouth’s dried spittle,
in the twisted chin
unable to deflect the voices of others,
and I wonder if he hears in his impotence

that song he used to sing at bath time,
about growing too old to dream,

having me to remember, when
he sang beneath the water’s surface,
and I held my breath and listened.

Sally Albiso
Octopus

Unable to return the last hours
I lie flattened and pale
overwhelmed with air.
My talented suckers are all a waste
on the exposed kelp
until you touch me
and I grasp you
my shaken deliverer.
I am still cross with death.

You bring me water
from the forests of the sea
that finds my three exhausted
hearts. So I’ll flash
to indigo. I’ll make
my head into a hardened shield
and begin the brows
of my farseeing eyes.
I’ll keep my frail billows
dispersing water.
I’ll steal this body
back from the sun.

Tim Roos
Thelonius Monk Circle

Souls should not be left uncovered
Though only gods of the invisible
Detect the broadening beneath the hat
Where scorching rays have passage.
Sound and light require periodic
Centrifuge in studios and airports,
On stages and streets, black and white bow
Unto the great harnessing of atmosphere
Where all unbelonging notes belong
And fall sweeter than blossoms.
Shuffle on, mumble on.
When the mind’s away
The soul will play.

Dawn McVay
Old Soldier at Fort

James R. Martin
Tugboatman’s Wife

She would come with her son to our cabin
to visit with my mother.
He played carelessly at our games
and she would gaze across the water.

We came all the way from Juneau
to be near his boat.
He said we’d be together more
but he’s gone just as much.

They lived on top of a hill
a hot car ride from any beach.
When we’d pass her house on the road
my mother shuddered at what she knew.
We knew her message:
we weren’t to break like alcoholics
for pure desire.

But I continually conjured the woman
drinking booze in an elaborate bottle,
waiting for the tug progressing as tide
at a single, wanton drag.
Later, she disappeared
like a coyote. The boy
was adopted out.
I picked up her dream
like a scoured shell with an interior sky.

Tim Roos
View from Victoria
A Rose in the Ocean
Wolves in Snow

Verna Parker
Snow Softly Falls at Emperor’s Gate
For Rosa Parks

She will not move, Mother.
I can tell by her lips, a trembling pour
of steel, I can tell

by the wide plant of her feet, her grit
safe beneath the canopy of her skirt,
and the fix of her fingers

in the basket lay of her lap, a pose
beyond anger. No, she does not speak.
Yet I lean in close to hear

should a word come
as I stare at the beetling reach
of an unwitting hair at her cheek.

They are coming for her.
Men can move all things, even
things with a will to not move.

My mouth so close I taste
the strength of sweet tea
on her breath.
It’s over, one says to her, though
nothing more than the close of her lips
seems to resist.

I learned from that day, Mother,
that I do not know about things
finished and those just begun.

Sarah Zale
Snow Angels

One ordinary morning,  
I opened the curtains  
to find hundreds of  
snow angels covering  
my lawn; so many  
I thought it had snowed  
in the night.  
Daffodils in the yard  
stood tall, expectant,  
questioning; have we  
returned to winter,  
the chill in the heart  
that sometimes never  
warms?  
Was I right the first  
time?  
Are the angels made of  
snow?  
If they melt in front  
of my eyes,  
will the burden of proof  
rest in the bed of daffodils  
from which I have risen?

Linda Herring
New Years Day 2006

Ernst-Ulrich Shafer
If You Stop Pedaling, It Falls Over.

Have you ever gone through the motions
Of riding a bicycle?
Parental legs pumping behind you
Holding you up, pushing you forward
You turn the pedals in wonder
And do not understand.
Then something breaks, snaps, pops, clicks.
You sit up straight
And zip forward
All alone
All on your own
With sheer confidence
And joy like wings guiding you
By the seat of your pants.

Somewhere in between
You crossed over
Stole the fire
Killed the dragon
Captured an elusive white mouse
Out of the corner of your eye
And the world is not the same.
Where that portal is
What that bridge is
I’m not certain,
Or what two planes
It lies between. . .
But this I know.

Going through the motions has nothing to do with riding a bicycle.

Guard this well.

Leslie Copeland
Rock, Paper, Scissors


I am rock. I am paper.

I am of the earth: steadfast, immutable.
I am of the earth: of seed, of root, of tree. Mutable. I am leaf.

I am constant. The shark, the cheetah, the snake at my side.
I am protean. I am beetle. Of phoenix. I am of chrysalis egg.

You should worry about scissors.
I think little about scissors.
This is a world of scissors and rocks.
The world does not think of scissors and rock in autumn.

Autumn is about falling. About winter. Only rocks survive.
Autumn is about gathering for winter. Paper gathers colors.

Scissors cut paper. Rock beats scissors.
Paper gathers colors even for rocks.
Scissors cut paper. Rock beats scissors.

Spring always comes.

Sarah Zale
Running Circles

I’m a very different person
inside I wish I could talk to
people don’t like to listen to me
mumble all you want they don’t want to hear
it wouldn’t be so hard if I didn’t care what they
think I’ll just keep to myself and everything will be
okay I feel empty without them they are my
friends don’t insult you or call you names behind your
back when I was a kid I knew my
friends who don’t know me and I don’t know their
lives that I can be a
part of me wants to open
up to this point I still don’t know who

I am not sure where I stand with
her eyes are not easy to
read a book and maybe I’ll feel
better that I talk to her find out who
she is breathtaking today but I say
nothing is stopping me from
talking to her is so easy and so
difficult to know what to
say nothing and you’ll stay where you
started saying something but her friend talks
louder now maybe she’ll hear me
then I can make an ass of my
Self.

Matt Funston
Children of A Dark-Ale Moon

After the full lunar eclipse October 27, 2004, as Port Townsend puts itself back together

. . . for Vincent

As they twist like castoffs of India ink and bristle
tossed from the rim of midnight by an unsteady artist
five crows brush the canvas of daybreak
their tails at work
blackening and texturing
the cracked rainy face of Water Street

in every village at first light
the early crow pecks some downtown street
like flint
liberating that tuft of survival or rhyme
that another ebony sage may have hidden
in a flake of sand
or harbored in the ocean of a puddle

the fast driver
alone in a silver pickup
thunders up Water Street, a hallucination
scattering puddle and crow like a tin-pot emperor
but cannot speed ahead much further
or he’ll drown for sure
going down bubbling his discord blues
through a dozen fathoms of riptides and disappointment
off Point Hudson

not to be outdone
the electric clock on the police station wall
jerks time around the second hand
the Juan de Fuca tides keep sliding in-out
like progeny of Juan’s old Spanish moon
and the universe turns as if time doesn’t matter
on a planet ruled not by Caesar
and his clock, but by
rust and termites
bacteria and avian flu,
tectonic plates that cannot rest,
the Greenland ice cap flaking apart
flooding port cities
under one hundred meters of sea

the last crow to leap away
from the red Lamborgini charging like a bull
through crow’s chuckhole
two flaps of wings
struts back to reclaim self image
like a check in the bank written on black water
then nabs a flat soggy crust of pizza
that last night’s dark-ale moon bequeathed him
as the moon escaped into new light out back
through the crow-blacked crack
of midnight

the universe goes on
  turning

  burning

spelling its name in all
languages

Raymond Greeott
Visitation

Our dog, returning with a sour smell and grease-black badges of mischief befuddled us over where he had been.

But I soon saw him on our walking path rekindled with his desire beginning another somersault into the ransacked scat of a coyote.

I could scarcely scold a being so happy in the scent of its ancient line, all hard-won stealth and wanderlust.

Tim Roos
Allow me this: that I may speak nonsense,
Bizarre and fatuous proclamations,
Unrestrained babblings in the wrong tense,
Riotous poetic asseverations.
For what would we be without such release
As this sweet, ecstatic, happy escape?
Our joy wither, and our laughter cease
Should nonsense be withdrawn from life’s landscape.
So let us commence our frenetic din,
Ridiculous verbal capers where all
Restraint lays fallow in its clammy skin
And where we hear bliss’s jubilant call.
    Forget structure, streamlined and cruel,
    Realize your divine right to be a fool.
Wild Wind

When birds are sleeping
wild winds whip
while trees dance in joy
and owls hunt mice
in the moonlight.

Karley Bowen
Have You Been To This Magical Place?

Ocean Shores is one of the places I admire. It sounds like the seagulls singing along with the chorus of the water swiftly and silently rushing against the giant, slippery, and mossy boulders.

I feel the sand rush in and out from between my toes as the water gently washes off the shoreline of blue and green, for it will never get high enough to reach the yellow dried-out grass.

While the level is slowly rising, more and more of this wonderful salt water is rising like yeast in bread. First to my ankle, then to my calves. It’s getting awfully high. It is now up to where I am practically swimming in it. It feels so good!

Every second I am feeling that wonderful salt water rise. As I stand there, I think about that wonderful feeling, the wonderful feeling where you kind of gaze into the sky. As the water gets higher, it washes me from the shore. I swim back to the shore excitedly waiting to feel that wonderful golden sand flow between my toes again. Once I get back to the shore, I jump on to the sand and sink into the sand. It felt like I was sinking into some ooblek.

My excitement sinks down like my feet in the sand. My mom calls. On our way home, I thought about the water sweeping me and my spirit away.

While I imagined the earth gently flowing out from between my toes, it reminded me of a snake slithering out from between two geodes ready to be cut in half to reveal its rainbowlike crystals.

I could still taste the salt in my mouth. I was still seeing things like sea turtles, waves, and seashells.

Paige A. Bennett
The Crocodile

My cat is as fluffy as a pillow.
Dogs’ tongues are slippery slugs.
This crocodile ate me and I got urped out and I was alive.
I felt indignant when my dad got a new girlfriend.

Sophie Knutzen
Curious
Cats (A Poem for Two Voices)

Cat cat cat
With a bat

Catch the rat
With your bat
Get the rat
In your paw

Please don’t
Go away
For I love to see you play

So please please please
Don’t
Go away

Dusti Lucas
Beyond Walls

Cool morning air
Felt refreshing against her skin
Morning sun played in her hair
Sparkles danced along the water
In beautiful patterns
Grey sand was warm against her feet
The gentle tranquil sound of waves
Sliding up the shore
Soothed her to no end
Every muscle in her body was relaxed
Here nothing could touch her
Beyond walls
She took deep breaths of the clean sea air
Filling her lungs completely
Beyond walls
She rested her hands lightly on the sand
Letting her fingertips just graze it
Closing her eyes
She sat in this position for a long while
Enjoying the sensation
Of being beyond walls

Amy Bryant
The Cat and The Mouse

I’m a cat
Just like that.
You’re a mouse
In my house.

You look tasty;
I’m in the mood
To get some pastry
And make you food.

Eagle Lucas
Winter

snowflakes
snowmen
fun
pine smell in the air

I hear laughter
snow swishing under sleds & skis

I wonder why
sometimes the snow sticks together
and sometimes it’s no good
for snowballs
at all

Maeve Harris
New Years!

New Years, New Years!
People are happy
People are sad,
But one girl is the saddest of all.
Her cat ate her fish,
Her cat ate his life.
The cat had Sushi, the fish had death.
The girl had tears.
“Oh stupid me,” cried the girl.
“Meow,” cried the cat.
“New Years is the best of times
and it’s the worst of times,”
cried the girl.
“Meow,” cried the cat.
That was the best of times for her.

Neika Miller Thomas
Cat

Discouraged, I close out my windows, succumbing to the computer. For an instant I pause, staring at my desktop. Two tigers, in the heat of battle, dance across the screen. Swiping and pouncing, they are flanked by tiny beads of water, as they rear up. I pause, listening to silence, lost in my own thoughts. A soft thud, not much more than rain hitting a lily pad meets my ears. As I turn, the eyes of perfected cool meet mine and my roommate prowls in. Making no apologies for waking me from my thoughts, he plunks down in the calculated center of the room. So much poise, so little effort. I sigh. Elegance stares intently back.

Every inch of his angled movements are etched with the wild. Whiskers twitch, an ear turns, soaking up the creaking of the house, and an itch is satisfied. How did this wild thing come to be in my living room? Every flick of his tail sends a message. Blinking, I swing around glancing at my desktop and back to Wild-thing. I scrutinize him attempting to single out where wild begins and ends. I fail, miserably. How was so much tiger-like charisma packed into this miniature body? Composure masks all thoughts, and my scrutiny comes up empty handed. His ebony coat glistens and rolls, like waves on the high sea. With a deep chuckle the sea comes to rest and he pads over.

“Purrrp”: it’s not a question.

Playing dumb I attempt to entertain, throwing a toy. It bounces, rolls past him and comes to a rest. He remains motionless, save for an ear lying flat out, as if slain by a bad pun. Wild-thing shifts, restlessly strolling forward he sits, just out of reach. Cocking his head to one side and flicking his tail he stares, irritated. Uncomfortable under his gaze, I shift my eyes and cross the room. Plopping on the couch, I flick through the pages of my book, surrendering three quarters of the couch to Wild-thing (he being the more assertive of the two of us). A few minutes pass, he picks himself up, paces over and seats himself, intuitively knowing where I am on the page. Giving up, I rise, stride to the kitchen, and plunk a cylinder of fish in his bowl. The gods are satisfied with the Friskies.

Miranda R. Robertson
Aliens Rock
Formline Wolf

Gus Johnson
Three Dragons

Audrey Mason
A Night to Remember

Jessica Christensen
An Ode to Oreo

Oreo!
As simple as black and white
Oreo!
The perfect snack for day or night
Oreo!
It’s mastered the art of being cookie
Oreo!
At being tasty, never a rookie

Say Oreo!
Your mouth will start to water
Eat Oreo!
With milk, colder or hotter

All other foods leave in utter defeat
Oreo’s the cookie that can’t be beat
Show me Oreo, the food that brings me peace
My hunger for it will never cease!

No oatmeal or chocolate chip
Can ever emit
Such a superior taste
Of vanilla cased
In chocolate, the selection
That gains my affection
It’s Oreo!
The cookie of perfection!

So, snacker,
Grab some milk and lookie!
It’s Oreo!
The perfect cookie!

Ev Grier

This is an original poem inspired by “An Ode to Oro” by Mojoranka. It can be found on the website www.hakubaikou.com. “Oro” is a Japanese exclamation of surprise used frequently by the character Kenshin in the manga Rurouni Kenshin.
Oak and Shadows

James R. Martin
An Ode to an Oak

Down by the river there was a big oak tree.
I still remember the good times we had.
He was a very good friend to me.
When he got chopped down I was very sad.

Building forts up in its limbs.
Sleeping under the stars at night.
Being my lifeguard when I’d swim.
Holding him close when I was surrounded with fright.

It was just me and my tree.
We were two of a kind.
Every time I saw him I was filled with glee.
Sometimes it even felt like he could read my mind.

When my brother would tease me I’d run there and hide.
I’d lie in his branches and feel like a bird.
He was my counselor and guide.
And what he said no one else heard.

I’d climb and climb, trying to touch the sky.
Hundreds of feet above the ground.
Sometimes I felt I could jump and fly.
Up here it is silent. There is no sound.
One day I came home,
My heart turned into a lump.
How could I write this poem
When I saw that my tree had become a stump?

Rachel Harner
SALLY ALBISO’S poems have appeared in *Tidepools* and *Pontoon*, an anthology of Washington State poets. She won first place in the *Tidepools* 2004 poetry contest and received honorable mention in the 2005 William Stafford Award. She resides west of Port Angeles.

Dwight Barry is a research scientist, professor, and avid outdoorsman who has recently learned the value of carrying an ice axe, even during spring hiking.

Paige A. Bennett is a ten-and-a-half-year-old. Paige is very proud to present this story of a visit to Ocean Shores to you. Paige has been to seven or more different states, including Washington, and has lived in four of them.

David and Shawna Burrows are a father/daughter team of photographers who launched a photography business in early spring 2005 called “As We See It” BDS Photography. They specialize in nature photography.

Alma Chong is from Honolulu, Hawaii. She has rediscovered her passion for drawing through the president’s professional development program at Peninsula College.

Jessica Christensen has dedicated her artwork, “A Night To Remember,” to Debbie Hallmuric “for her patience in teaching me art.”

Leslie Copeland is a single mom studying journalism at Peninsula College. She has degrees in English and history and previously worked for AT&T Wireless in Seattle. As a child, she lived on wildlife refuges in New Mexico and South Dakota.

Kathy Cunningham is a professional photographer. Her subject matter varies from scenic photos to still-life studies. She has been a Forks resident since the late 1960s and presently works in real estate.

Barb Diltz Chandler lives in Port Townsend, Washington. Her essays, poetry, and photographs have appeared in a number of literary journals and monthly magazines.

Jeanne Engesath has been a member of the Port Angeles community since early 2001 when she and husband Vern moved here from Juneau, Alaska. Jeanne enjoys painting in her studio as well as outdoors on location, either solo, with friends, or as part of Plein Air Washington, which is Washington’s outdoor painters association. Her work has won several awards both locally and in Alaska.

Emily Evans Larson was raised in the Midwest and has lived throughout the United States, currently residing with her husband in the Olympic foothills south of Port Angeles. She studies writing with Sarah Zale in Peninsula College’s continuing education program.

Andrea Farrell is a student at Peninsula College. She fears failure, large birds, and microscopic brain parasites.

Jim Fisher is married to Ann, and they live in Sequim. He has taught English at Peninsula College since 1994. The past few years, Jim has gotten interested in online education, so he plans to continue developing courses and teaching online for PC from the shores of Lake Sutherland.

Janet Apolonio Flatley, a Sequim resident since 1993, was born in Quito, Ecuador, and grew up in New York City. She is married to Pete Flatley, and they have three children and six grandchildren. Janet was a homemaker for 14 years, a certified public accountant and corporate executive for 14 years, and is now retired.

Matt Funston was born in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. After attending Peninsula College he plans to go on to major in English. He’s still working on thinking in complete sentences.
RAYMOND GREEOTT, happy in the American dream of a second profession, makes life in Port Townsend — ranked fourth among crow, gull, and Fred the otter. He recently won the International Publication Prize from the Atlanta Review, and is now published in approximately 125 countries. He received the William Stafford Award personally from William Stafford shortly before Stafford's death.

EV GRIER is 13 and lives in Port Angeles. In her free time, she likes to write not only poems, but stories as well. She attends Stevens Middle School, 8th grade.

RACHAEL HARNER is 11 and lives in Forks. She is active in 4-H, basketball, violin, recorder, and Tae Kwon Do.

MAEVE HARRIS is a nine-year-old third-grade student who loves soccer, acting, cross-country skiing, or playing blues on the piano—depending on the season. She is going to Germany this summer for World Cup Soccer and hopes to write a poem or two while traveling.

LINDA HERRING attended Oklahoma Baptist University and moved to the Olympic Peninsula in 1993. Her poetry has been published in numerous journals and she has received two nominations for a Pushcart Prize.

PAULA ICE is a transplant from Kentucky, and has lived in the Northwest since 1997. She is a teacher, quilter, and pianist and has recently discovered the world of photography. Paula says that she loves “capturing memories with my camera.”

GUS JOHNSON is 17 and was born in Port Angeles. He enjoys hiking and climbing in the mountains, along with snowboarding and traveling. He created this piece of art at a Northwest form line drawing class that he took over the summer at Olympic Park Institute.

LYNN JOHNSON has been a greenhouse owner and manager in the Carlsborg area for the past twenty-five years. Because of a business closure she has chosen to return to school, studying multimedia. She is an avid sports photography and videography buff.

ROSALIE KAUNE lives in Port Angeles with her husband, Bob. They have six grown children and enjoy camping in the Pacific Northwest and the Sierra Nevada range of mountains in California, photographing the various landscapes. Rosalie works at Peninsula College in the Enrollment Services office.

SOPHIE KNUTZEN is a 4th grade student at Quilcene Elementary School. She has four horses and she is getting a new one.

JERRY KRAFT is a published playwright, poet, and theatre critic. He’s retired after twenty-seven years of working in psychiatric mental health and lives in Port Angeles with his wife, Bridgett, and their daughters, McKenna and Luxie.

PATRICK LOAFMAN says, “maybe all art starts as a single pinprick; like the universe, it expands beyond the iron grip of logic, spilling out of the ears and eyes into something that reeks of both mud and magic, like rivers or women. An artist can do nothing but allow the wound to bleed.”

DUSTI LUCAS is a nine-year-old, home-schooled girl in Port Angeles. She likes to play music and read and has two brothers and a sister.

EAGLE LUCAS is an eleven-year-old, home-schooled Port Angeles native. His favorite activities include playing music and going to concerts. He hopes to be a professional musician one day.

JAMES R. MARTIN is retired, enjoys photography as an active amateur, and has been working in black-and-white since 1997 in his own darkroom. He roams the Peninsula looking for images.

AUDREY MASON is a third-grade student at Quilcene Elementary School. She collects Pokemon cards and believes in dragons.

MARTI MATHIS received a certificate in Fundamentals of Fine Art and also completed a home-study course in watercolor from Northlight Art School in 1998. She integrates her knowledge of color, composition, and drawing from teachers, workshops, and technical art books into her own realistic painting style. Most recently, Marti has been painting subjects of interest with values of black watercolor pigment, leaving the white of the paper for the lightest values.
SELDEN MCKEE retired five years ago and moved to Port Townsend. His photographic interest is primarily in black-and-white images. He does all the work himself, processing and printing in his “old fashioned” darkroom, exploring the endless possibilities for creative expression that black-and-white photography offers.

DONNA MORRIS is a writer who has lived on the Olympic Peninsula for many years. She and her husband spend their summers fishing in Alaska. She has two beautiful daughters and a funny, happy grandson.

LINDA NAJERA has lived on the Olympic Peninsula all of her life. For the last twelve years, she has made her home in Forks, Washington, adding creativity and color to the West End. She finds great joy in the natural world and spends much of her time combining her love of her family and friends with her love of gardening, woodworking, and writing poetry. This is her first published work.

ERIN PALLAI is 15, in the 9th grade, and enjoys drawing aliens and dragons.

VERNA PARKER is interested in the flora and fauna of the Olympic Peninsula and these are the subjects of her painting and writing.

Marilyn Pollock is a retiree and great grandmother who moved from the Chicago area to Sequim in 1997. Her obsession with writing began in a creative writing course taught by Phyllis Miletich. Marilyn continues to meet with the Word Weavers writing group, many of whom are former students of Miletich and who remember her fondly.

JIM QUATTROCCHI is a twenty-year old Port Angeles resident who hikes extensively in the Olympic National Park. He enjoys the diverse galaxy of colors and textures found in nature in this area, and tries to incorporate them into his art.

MIRANDA R. ROBERTSON is a 13-year-old 7th grader currently attending Sequim Middle School. She is on the Honor Roll. Other than writing, Miranda enjoys drawing, working with animals, hanging out with friends, reading with her cat, and playing basketball. In the future she plans to work with animals as a zoologist, or to be a journalist.

TIM ROOS lived in Southern California and Central Washington before settling in Port Angeles with his wife and two children 10 years ago. He enjoys the outdoors and the activities of his kids. He teaches at Port Angeles High School.

CHRISTOPHER L. STRATTON is 55, married to Shelly for 32 years, the proud father of Willow and Danielle, and the amazed grandfather of Alec and Dylan. He writes and takes photos to assist his fading memory, and lives in a majestic fog on top of Lost Mountain in Sequim.

LAWRENCE TYLER lived and worked several years in Asia, and now resides in the Olympic Peninsula. His publications include an Asian memoir, The Blind Palmist.

NAN TOBY TYRRELL finds that writing and music are creative expressions which give her an opportunity to share her ideas and feelings. She is inspired by the fragile beauty of life to write poems that capture memory.

SARAH ZALE’S poetry has appeared in Comstock Review, Sow’s Ear Poetry Review, Wind Publications, Mute Note Earthward, CPU Review and others, as well as on websites such as Literary Salt and PoetsAgainsttheWar.org. She teaches at Peninsula College as well as online for the University of Phoenix. Poetry First!, an online workshop she facilitates from her website (www.sarahwrite.com), has been ongoing since 2003.

ARLENE ZORNES grew up in abject poverty with dysfunctional parents. She was in and out of several foster homes and finally by age 10 was sent to live next door to her grandparents. In a small coastal community in Mendocino County, California, she was surrounded by a rich cultural history of many ethnic groups. This diverse background has inspired her to write.