Flight

2012

An Anthology of the Written and Visual Arts

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Table of Contents

Poetry

Shani Anderson / Man Apart 50
Ernie Brewer / Process of Individuation 71
Jacob Thomas Burnard / Three Things from My Father 70
Karrie Castillo / The Girl I Wish I’d Never Become 75
Zane Castillo / Nightfall 4
Sandi Colby / It Could Have Been So Different . . . 46
Raquel Fiorello / Your Rarity 78
Allyson Ford / Normalcy 76
Ryan Gallegos / Failed Blacksmith 5
Jason Hall / Holding hands and whispering . . . 67
Robert Hall / Scavengers 59
Victoria Hernandez / Never-ending Drops of Memories 14
Ruchi Jariwala / Time 16
Jennifer Knelange / The Locket 22
Marissa Knelange / Sonnet for a Gunsmith 31
Christian LaMattery / True Love 35
Edward H. Lamore / Charming I’m Not 17
Megan Lane / Picture Perfect 48
Cody Llamas / 5 Pounds 30
Emily Lucio / Descendant 6
John Marshall / The Light 49
Joy-Ann McDaniel / I Lay Awake at Night 23
Heather Mcmillen / Dragon Cloud 7
Justin Mitchell / Laudanum Dreams 11
Sharon O’Connor / Fingertips 47
Allyson Palma / The Letter of Love from a Bride to the Groom 24
Patricia Skewes / Over It 57
Edie Schmoll / Encounter 77
Elizabeth Smith / I Am 79
Lori Stanley / Wild Flag 66
Alicia Whitaker / The Page 80
Table of Contents

Prose

Joshua Adamson / In Living a War 72
Jose Aguirre / It’s Nature 54
Sura Alzaidy / The Most Intense Moment of My Life 32
Miriam Best / Undaunted by the Intruder 62
Jassa Kotzen / Collected Pieces 26
Jason Marshall / The Crossroads 18
Curtis Charles Smith / Unified Field Theory 58
Anthony Torres / Jesus of Suburbia: Eye for an Eye 8

Visuals

Amanda Adams / Havasu 28
Amanda Bussen / Guitar Closeup 12
Makayla Davis / Chains 39
Sureya Davis 44
Sheila Ehorn / Lake Esinore 41
Amanda Field 60
Raquel Fiorello / Liberty Leaving 40
Jessica Guzman 68
Jenette Hatch 42, 61
Tiffany Hunter 36
Kevin Johnston 37
Suzanne King 45
Salena Moffett 38
Janelle M. Munoz / 8 43
Diane Parrott 52
Angela Petersen / Periscope 29
Joe Posadas 53
Delia San Martin / Johnny Depp as Bernini 20
Sadia Sakhi 69
George Spalding / Roadster by the Lake 13
Anna Vest / Calitz Adonis Havitonne 21
The city’s noise begins to lessen.
Weary workers retreat,
to welcoming homes.
Engines cease their rackets,
voices fall silent,
shops lock doors and close gates,
children race to a mother’s call.
Lights begin to emerge,
in dark windows,
shuffling steps advance to,
corners of comfort.
Ryan Gallegos / Failed Blacksmith

The blue sky is clouded;  
it’s primed to burst,

Trying desperately to climax,  
ever reaches its peak,

The anvil is hot,  
No voice to speak,

The breeze picks up,  
Moves in vain,

No sign of virga,  
not even rain,

Left with heat,  
the day progresses forth,

Good try Mother Nature,  
My dream you did thwart.
Emily Lucio / Descendant

As the unforgiving scorching sun finally retreats
The first confident leaf is detached and falls
Finally after surviving the brutal summer heat
The crisp morning of autumn slowly crawls
The trees must admit the fall’s defeat.

With hardly a moment to enjoy cool air
The sticks are stripped of their leaves
The harshness hardly seems fair
Although with the loss the surface can now breathe
Another cycle begins bare
As I walk home, I look around me.
The fire has destroyed everything.
   It has destroyed houses.
   It has destroyed plants.
   It has destroyed lives.
I look up into the sky and am startled.
A huge black cloud floats over me,
   In a weird shape.
   With the sun behind the cloud,
   And its weird shape,
That harmless black mass looks like
   An evil, demonic dragon,
   Stretching its head over the sky
To create chaos and destruction over the land.
I rush home and close the door behind me,
But I cannot so easily blot out the horrifying image,
   Of the great dragon cloud.
Anthony Torres / Jesus of Suburbia: Eye for an Eye

A bell jingles as the swinging door to John’s Ice Cream Parlor opens allowing a cool breeze into the otherwise hot parlor. The forecast outside is overcast. Clouds are accumulated together making an even glow of bright sunlight which causes silhouettes of people passing by on the sidewalk and street.

Seth Vega, at first, is a silhouette but when he steps into the fluorescents of the parlor he is seen wearing square, dark, thick-rimmed sunglasses.

Seth walks into the light a little bit more, being cautious of something or someone. He wears a blue flannel shirt with thin lines of white, purple, and yellow. The sleeves are rolled up past his elbows, exposing the healing wounds held by stitches on his left arm.

To match his shirt, Seth wears a pair of navy blue Converse with purple shoelaces. The hems of his grey slim-fitted jeans fall crumpled over his blue chucks.

The bell stops jingling and Jasmine Shilling pokes her head up from behind the counter.

“Hi, welcome to John’s Ice Cream Parlor!” Jasmine says not really noticing Seth, “I’ll be with you in just a minute.”

To Jasmine Mondays are the slowest days of the week. Mondays are the one day she uses to organize the weekly sales for her boss – the owner of the parlor – John Schmidt.

Seth stands at the far end of the ice cream bar. Whatever light manages to penetrate through the clouds barely reaches his knees, keeping the rest of his body in a cool shadow.

“Okay, what can I get…--?” Jasmine’s voice trails off as she realizes who her customer is. Jasmine snaps at Seth, “What do you want?”

Jasmine didn’t mean it in what flavor ice cream he wanted. Seth ignores the venom in Jasmine’s words. “I’d like a rocky road sundae with banana slices on top, please.”

Jasmine, annoyed, begins to construct the sundae with a waffle bowl. Three scoops of rocky road ice cream showered in banana slices, drowned in hot fudge and delicately topped with an organic hand-picked cherry.

“Is that for here or to go?” Jasmine says, adding emphasis to the ‘to go’.

Seth, reaching for his wallet in his back pocket as Jasmine walks to the register, says, “For here.”

Jasmine lets out a sigh and rolls her periwinkle blue eyes.
“That’ll be five dollars.”
Seth pulls out a five dollar bill with an ‘X’ crossing out Abraham Lincoln’s left eye.

Jasmine takes the money, places it into the tray and rips off the receipt, thrusting it into Seth’s hand.

Seth picks out a blue spoon out of the tray of colorful plastic spoons and walks to a small square table, sitting against the wall. Sitting along the wall keeps Seth in a shadow and keeps him facing Jasmine, who stands behind the cash register with her arms folded over her chest and glares at Seth.

Seth attempts to eat a few spoonfuls in the ringing silence but Jasmine continues to glare. Giving up the attempt of aloofness Seth lightly stabs his spoon into the sundae.

“Is something wrong, Jasmine?” he asks.
Jasmine doesn’t say a word, she just continues to glare.
“I guess Jordan already told you,” Seth says.
“He didn’t tell me anything. I saw the video posted on his profile,” Jasmine practically shrieks. “I saw the video his drunken buddies took of you hitting Jordan in the eye with an eight-ball. What the hell were you thinking?”

“I was thinking an eye for an eye,” Seth replies.
“What?!”
“I’m guessing he didn’t tell you about the prank he pulled on me two weeks ago, right?”

Jasmine’s eyes smooth out a bit, they still have anger and venom in them but she feels a little sympathy for Seth. Jasmine knows of Jordan’s pranks. Everyone at the high school knows him as Jordan “The Prankster” Frye.

“Jordan’s pranks are stupid and naïve,” Jasmine says, “but they’re harmless.”

Seth bursts into laughter. Jasmine’s hair stands on end as a chill runs up her spine.

When Seth settles down he picks up his spoon and licks it clean.
“Two weeks ago he found out where I work. You know, the auto shop my dad owns?” Jasmine nods and Seth continues. “He brought in his car, which needed a new starter, and decided to take a stroll in restricted areas to customers.”

Seth chuckles a little. “His excuse was that he is my buddy and therefore grants him access to employees’ only areas.”

Seth digs his spoon into the ice cream and eats it quickly.
“I tried getting him out; didn’t want him messing with the other clients’ cars. He somehow got hold of two oil drip pans and covered one with the other. He throws it under an old Volkswagen Beetle. I tell him to
get the hell out of the garage and he runs out cackling like a hyena.”

Seth sniffs as he begins to cry but controls the emotion with a shuddering breath.

“I get on my back and try to retrieve the pans with my left arm.”
Jasmine notices for the first time the stitches and scabbing burns on his left arm. She raises her right hand to her mouth in surprise.

“It turns out he had placed a cherry bomb in the pans, one still had oil in it and I’m guessing he had found pieces of broken glass.”
Seth stands up, walks to the counter and grabs a piece of napkin.
“It explodes, pieces of glass and metal flying everywhere.”
Seth blows his nose, tears running down his face. Jasmine notices blood on his left cheek, “Hey, you’re bleeding.”
Seth checks his arm.
“No, it’s on your cheek.”
“Sorry. I was crying.”
Seth grabs another napkin and begins to dab at his eyes. He removes his sunglasses and Jasmine shrieks.
Seth’s right eye is brown but his left eye is red. The pupil is glazed over, blood covering his whole eye. Pieces of metal shrapnel still stuck in his eye – unable to have been removed due to a high damage risk during surgery. Some parts of his eyelid are scabbing burns. Scarring cuts zigzag from his eye to his ear.
Seth wipes his sunglasses – after he dabs at the blood – and puts them back on.
“How does it go?” he asks. “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind?”
Jasmine nods.
“I came to say goodbye. Though Jordan caused more damage, his lawyer dad hasn’t lost to anyone in court. I’m most likely going to jail; I don’t stand a chance, especially since you thought I was guilty.”
Jasmine instantly regrets mistreating Seth.
“Doctors say Jordan won’t see for a week or two. What I would give… instead I’m permanently blind.” Seth picks up his sundae and begins walking toward the door. “And I can’t afford surgery with all the lawsuits.”
He glances at Jasmine who is paralyzed with shock, “I was going to ask you out that day. I was going to come by during my break.”
Seth turns away. “Jordan knew I was going to come by.”
Seth opens the door and walks out into the light leaving Jasmine staring at his silhouette as he walks away.
Justin Mitchell / Laudanum Dreams

Old, old vein
The atrophied twine that binds together jagged fragments
Of bones the bride broke
We are dreamers
And unburdened, we float
Above mountains that cast no shadow

We were dreamers
There is a void
Lost in the maudlin dust of a world
We mercifully destroyed
Amanda Bussen / Guitar Closeup
George Spalding / Roadster by the Lake
Victoria Hernández / Never-ending Drops of Memories

Hear the sounds,
Smell the air,
Drop by drop, everywhere.
Used to love,
Each random shower,
Until thoughts turned sour.
A walk outside,
Just to see,
The rain before me.
Memories come back,
Now with hate,
Trusted you, big mistake.
Puddles surround me,
Increasing in size,
Leaving my feelings disguised.
Take a risk?
Through it all,
Hesitant, scared to fall.
Rain falls quickly,
Feelings do too,
Still have no clue.
Sight of rain,
A triggered memory,
Things will never be.
Reached the end,
Of the showers,
Now waiting for hours.
Drowned in thoughts,
Reached the end,
Showtime now, Let’s pretend.
Smile for people,
Nothing is wrong,
Heads up, staying strong.
Time never stops for anyone
if it would,
youth would still be young,
old would still be preached as gold,
earth would still be green.
though,
it’s good that time moves on
because what wonder it shows
every sapian,
provided 24 hours a day
but only some could prove
the importance of their stay.
Edward H. Lamore / Charming I’m Not

Wish I had the words to say  
but only standing stupefied to this day  
A quip I never learned,  
a smile I always burned

To take someone’s hand now would be divine  
Yet the world is surrounding me with a strange guise  
So I push my feelings below  
until I find out that which I’ve never known
The high desert air whistles through the parked car. The windows don’t roll all the way down anymore but I keep trying. The two of us stare ahead at the sun-dead waste in a silence that whistles.

When she called it had all been embarrassing. This was a part of the family we were much too self-involved to think about and she came from the desert like the three wise men all bearing faustian gifts.

It was a job they said. Not just a job, the Capital JOB. The Job to End All Jobs. That sound was opportunity whistling. This was a disembodied hand reaching from the heavens to pull me squarely out of the squalor into the stratosphere of success.

“That is more money than I’ve ever made. You need to think about this.”

“Yeah, school is a waste of time and you don’t even know what you want to do. Jobs like this is why people go to school.”

“If you don’t take this you can look for somewhere else to stay, we don’t abide fools.”

We only drive this far for vacations and funerals. Gas costs money and the cars are held together with clothes-hangars and profane kinds of prayers. I watch the freeway for the car that is coming to take me away from this gas station of waiting. My hand of holy handouts to pull me from the purgatory of eternal poorness. Still we can’t speak. Still the whistling.

When I was eight I think he asked the question, if such things count as questions. “Do you want me to save money to help you with college because I think we can put some away if we don’t buy food.” There was no questionmark. “That’s okay, Dad.” That’s okay, Dad. That’s okay I could speak complete sentences before other children even uttered their first guttural nonsense. That’s okay I was placed in advanced courses in elementary school because it was much too elementary. That’s okay to ask questions loaded like a gun to the the head of a child. “I don’t think I want to go to college.”

I avoided the SAT’s because like gas they cost money. I avoided the SAT’s because like every other standardized test that had been presented to me, I knew I would master it. I imagined coming home with the paper and telling my parents how I would attend any school my heart desired even the really expensive nice ones. I imagined my family with bulging bellies and hungry eyes on
a television commercial. “Just a simple phone call can change the future of these people. Please, please give a helping hand.”

Here was her car at last. Tears mingled with the sweat and dripped off our chins. He had raised a man in his image, too proud to weep. The wind whistled and stung. Still the car was waiting.

“Well, I guess this is it.”
“I guess it is.”

In the wastes before me was a trail, worn bare by the passing of proud men since man discovered they could make an honest living off the toil of another. Nothing flourishes long on this path. They wave goodbye to their families every day and collapse in a heap just over the hill. The wind whistles through the mountain of bone. He does not speak but he calls me from there. Come be bones like me. Make me immortal.
Delia San Martin / Johnny Depp as Bernini
Anna Vest / Calitz Adonis Havitonne
Jennifer Knelange / The Locket

A silver locket dangling in my chest
Barely cracked open, a shadowed form
Of a beautiful face that I can no longer see clearly
An image so faded that I can no longer tell
Whether it is still present
Or all that remains is a reflection
But too afraid to lift it from my chest and bust the lock open
Examine the image, and discover the truth for myself.
Joy-Ann McDaniel / I Lay Awake at Night

I lay awake at night and wish I had lived another life
I lay awake at night and cry
I lay awake at night and tell myself I am alive
I lay awake at night and I am tired
I lay awake at night and hope I don’t die
I lay awake at night and I can at least say I tried
I lay awake at night and think of how people lie
I lay awake at night and I ask myself why?
Why am I not accepted for being one of a kind?
Why can’t I take back a few nights of my life?
Why can’t I surpass the misery and strife?
Why can’t I just be me?
Why can’t I start over and be free?
Allyson Palma / The Letter of Love from a Bride to the Groom

I am writing this letter to you, because I have something to say.

Today is the day that I will tell you this…My Beloved

From the first time I saw you I saw Heaven’s Light

From the first time I saw you I wasn’t afraid to fall asleep at night

From the first time I saw you I started to write again of stories

    of hope, miracles, heroes and magic.

From the first time I saw you I could dance again.

From the first time I saw you I knew I was given a chance

    to be happy

From the first time I saw you I felt like smiling for the first time

    in years

From the first time I saw you I felt like I found what

    I was looking for.

Before you came along my songs were sad and alone like me

Before you came along I had no one to say Hello and Goodbye to
Before you came along my days were all about homework

and my job

Before you came along it was always me and my empty house

Now I can smile, laugh, play and enjoy being around someone

to share my stories with

Because of you the man I love I am happy again,

I’m no longer alone

You my beloved have made my days brighter, made me feel special

and made me feel like happiness was real.

I love you my groom or should I say my husband.

And so today I am glad to say I Do
She didn’t understand her purpose. Was there one? Or was her life destined to be stuck in an instant loop? The puppeteer was to yank the strings of this fragile girl this way and that, to pick up his messes that he himself didn’t like doing. Loathsome creature. How it used to be a prince in her eyes. A charming, relaxed, carefree gentleman who would do anything for her. He who would protect her from her very maker, when she was lost on her path of life he was her shield and comfort.

Why had everything changed so suddenly? The chapter had ended with an unfinished sentence, an unsolved problem. This path couldn’t always be like that, could it? Weaving through questions unresolved, passing opportunists that held their arms open to the passer. Later leaving you left to mourn over the childhood that was robbed from you, to deal with the deaths of those who had all so suddenly changed.

It pains me to say this to you, young one. Yes, the path ahead is one that we all must take. And for better or for worse we come through to the end, our faces showing how tiring this long journey is for us all. It’s ugly to realize, yes, nevertheless do not walk stepping on each broken glass ignoring the beauty that does surround you. The marvels that have carved this earth that continues to grow. Continue on with eyes open and do not take for granted anything.

The girl nodded with her eyes closed, seeing through her mind’s eye the long road ahead. There was no light at the end of this road, in fact it was draped in darkness.

“Create the stars. Light your own path as you see fit,” the elder’s wise voice said. It was comforting to hear it beside her. Suddenly she wasn’t so lonely anymore, she only hoped it wouldn’t
stray from her, that it would always be there when she needed it. Only when you least expect it, the voice answered telepathically to the girl.

“Yes,” she whispered. “I will find the courage to continue on. I won’t let others tarnish this journey before me. And when my journey is done, the darkness that covers it now will be an endless sea of stars that I’ve collected along the way. Oh what a beautiful dream I will live.”
Amanda Adams / Havasu
**Cody Llamas / 5 Pounds**

You were the worst five pounds I’ve ever lost
a wasted pendulum of time in my thoughts
back and forth in coercing dissatisfaction
you attacked my heart with love and attraction

With desperate attempts to assume you were good
I gave more of myself than you ever understood
My heart was a toy you stuffed in the junk drawer
I’m a fool for love and I’m left with my chest sore

You were the worst nights I ever stayed up
I thought you were worth the time I gave up
Some things you said I really believed
Even my conscience knew I was deceived

My heart was excited and harder it beat
It made me so sick I could hardly eat
I could show you nothing but my respect
Till I understood you were just a regret.
Marissa Knelange / Sonnet for a Gunsmith

Just east of California
Through sandy desert Nevada
Slanted sun rays in late winter
Rolls a bad ass black Jeep Wrangler
Knobby tires and a 4 inch lift
Off road can take on any rift
Dark aviators, door open
Wind is calm against loud engine
Blazing cigarette burns in hand
Hair is golden like sun on sand
After long work week - gunsmithing
Taking it easy - exploring
Jeep glistens like obsidian
One with the desert, mountain man
Sura Alzaidy / The Most Intense Moment of My Life

Certain experiences stick with you forever, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, but it’s best to learn to take even the most intense moment of your life and turn it into something positive, as difficult as it might be, because that will show your strength and strengthen your character. I never thought I’d lose someone I know and care for at age seventeen, better yet, be the last to speak to that friend before no one ever saw him again. Hussain and I were coworkers for three years at a place called Vine Ripe in San Diego, California. Vine Ripe was a huge market and had a fancy Mediterranean restaurant next to it under the same name. I worked as the cashier for the restaurant, while most everyone else was working the store. Hussain’s older sister and our mutual best friend Hani were our managers; his younger brother worked with us too.

For three years, and 33 workers, we were like one big family. We actually all enjoyed working there. It was like getting away from everything else and being at peace with the same routine, same outfit, same environment, and same mood of smiling because you’re used to it for work; but for Hussain, it was different. You could see the depression in his face; he was a walking dead soul. However, he was also handsome and had a big heart, had all the girls going after him, had the nice car, was financially stable, got along with everyone, but still wasn’t happy. He would always take his lunch break at the restaurant, and sat on the stool to talk to me and Luis the cook. We had lots of jokes and laughs. I remember one time: I, he, and Hani took our lunch break together and somehow ended up having a food fight and got hot sauce all over our shirts, running all over the parking lot on a slow day. The three of us were close. He fell for me, but knew I and his brother really liked each other. I always just viewed him like the protective older brother he acted like. He had told me several times, “Sura, I feel like I’m already dead, death feels so close . . . Am I crazy?” I would tell him not to talk that way, but didn’t understand why he did, and didn’t try to get to the bottom of it. I regret that.

One night, while we were closing, he came to the grill and tried to play a prank on me, joking around, put salt in my raspberry ice tea drink. I didn’t know he had done that, but saw him laughing and staring at me walking out the door and telling me something I couldn’t hear. I was confused, which was probably why he walked back from the parking lot and felt bad and threw away my drink, made
me a new one, and said, “Ha ha, sorry, you don’t want to drink that, trust me . . . Bye.” He then stacked up some tables and chairs outside as usual, so I didn’t have to, smiled and left. His brother and sister were still there closing up. His brother Ahmed came and stacked the rest of the tables and chairs, while his sister was counting the drawers with Hani. The owner was there that night too. His brother and sister left after ten minutes, and I was waiting for my dad to pick me up that night, since I was still only sixteen and didn’t drive at the time. After about five minutes Hani got a call, and I will never forget the look he had on his face as he was staring at me while someone was saying something on the other line. He hung up and said, “We have to go!”

None of us knew what really happened, but we could all feel it, but it felt impossible to believe it! Hussain’s sister was the one who had called after getting home with Ahmed that night and her mom asked, “Where’s Hussain?” Then it hit them, they had seen a car accident on their way home, on the other side of the road, but the car was white and Hussain’s car was a navy blue. She told us to go check while she headed back too. My dad had come by then, so we followed Hani and the owner to the scene. The road was closed, and the cops refused to give any information. Then one cop told us they couldn’t identify the body or even the license plate because it had flown from one side of the road to the opposite while turning and hit the tree downward going entirely in flames. We asked, “What color is the car?” He said, “We don’t know, it turned white because we had to put the fire out.” Hussain’s family all came, his father, mother, four sisters and brother. We all waited at the corner of Fletcher Parkway, across the street from Boardwalk in between La Mesa and El Cajon, California, from 10 p.m. until 4 a.m.

Watching his father tearing up and his brother trying so hard not to was very difficult, and, due to our culture, I didn’t even know what was the respectful way of comforting his brother, who was sitting next to me, all suffocated; I can’t even explain the pain that I now remember feeling as I write this. I couldn’t handle it, I got up and walked down the street. Little did I know, his younger sisters and mother were sitting down the street. I couldn’t turn back at that point. Their youngest, eight-year-old sister looked up to me a lot. When she saw me she ran up to me and hugged me so tight! I hugged her back; we were both quiet for a minute, torn inside. With those big brown eyes filled with tears, this beautiful little girl looked up at me and said, “Sura, is my brother dead?” I didn’t respond and just hugged her tighter with tears uncontrollably dripping
down my face. “No one is telling me anything. Please just tell me, Sura, I know he is, just tell me . . . ,” she continued. That was the hardest, most intense moment I had felt! It was like someone took away my voice, I went completely speechless. Not only because she asked me, but also because of the way she said it, so sharply, that her words were cutting me inside . . . it was surreal, because even though I knew the dots connected, a part of me was still expecting him to walk out of nowhere or call and it being another prank of his, or he went to a friend’s house, or out for a drive and got lost and his phone died. For a month after that even during the funeral, it still hadn’t hit me that he was gone, no matter how many times I broke down and cried. I was always expecting him to walk towards me out of nowhere and surprise us, and still do till this very day. The image of him just never died.
Christian LaMattery / True Love (Sonnet)

My love for her burned greater than the Sun;
She was the most beautiful woman
There ever was; and with this my heart she won;
She loved me like no one else ever can.
Our love was by and away beyond compare;
Others loved before us, but ours was the most pure;
When we would go out everyone would stare;
Forever we would be together for sure.
Every time we kissed the heavens rejoiced;
Every time we were together every being was warmed;
Every time we made love higher the universe was hoist;
Every time we whispered the Earth was turned.
And then one day our love burned out,
Now all we do with each other is shout.
Kevin Johnston
Makayla Davis / Chains
Raquel Fiorello / Liberty Leaving
Sureya Davis
Sandi Colby / It Could Have Been So Different . . .

Look at me! Look at me!
Oh, wait . . .
I’m really not that pretty,
Or fashionable,
And my clothes are old and faded.
If you look at me too long, I will get nervous
and very self-conscious.

Listen to me! Listen to me!
Oh, wait . . .
I’m not brilliantly funny,
Or especially articulate,
And my voice is too soft and I talk too fast.
If you have something to say, go ahead—
what I was going to say really wasn’t that important.

Pick me! Pick me!
To answer a question. (What if I’m wrong?)
To play on a team. (What if I’m too clumsy?)
To go on a date. (What if I’m not good enough?)
To be a best friend. (What if I’m not worth it?)

If one person had taken the time to see me;
If someone had paused long enough to hear me;
If anyone had ever chosen me;

If . . .
To wash away a fingertip
Is simply quite a chore.
It’s more than scrubbing counters
Or sweeping up the floor.

The process is a long one;
An investment every day.
It takes more than a year
To wash fingertips away.

First you build Tolerance
(a hefty mental block).
Then you mix with bleach
(the result’s quite a shock).

Second you grab Submission
(the fate you chose is here).
Then you rinse and wring
Making sure to drain the fear.

Last you take Dependance
(you can’t escape or run).
Then you put it in the dryer
And in minutes you’ll be done.
Who is this girl pictured here?
unrecognizable
Happy for the first time
in years

She is me
The real me
the world fails to notice

Society sees what is cropped
Not pictured here
Seeing only my wheelchair:
a prison I am locked in
failing to understand

My friends thought it would be fun
to take this photo
highlighting my new hair
putting make-up on my face

sitting in my Sunday best
black and red plaid shirt
coral pink lips
flowers in my hair

I smile for the camera
exposed
hoping for acceptance
John Marshall / The Light

Sometimes the light flickers
Sometimes the light stays on
I can feel myself get sicker
I know there’s something wrong
The light begins to fade
The light begins to dim
I’m waiting for the day
That all of this can end
My light is gone from here
My light has stopped burning
The hope for my career
Will never be returning
I want to be a writer
But my words grow quieter
Man apart of me
Something of us
Maybe even we
Man aside from lust

We muster up
The courage to be different
Different to be strange
Poor to be broken

And those without names
The streets are our homes
Bus benches is what we know
Cardboard is a dear friend

Food scraps now and then
You’re all invited to this domain
To search the streets for petty change
Holes in our clothes as well as our hearts
The shoes that are our soles are tearing apart

Judgment we all know
Time we get, time exposed
Brown nosed with yellow eyes
The poor, a world despises to despise

With my cup as I hold it out
You’ll watch the words come out my mouth
Spare some change I’ll say
As you turn to walk away, going on about your day

Though some point and they laugh
Been beaten with bats and crankshafts
As blood runs down my face I’m left for dead
No one to help me cause no one cares
Man apart of me
The things I face, the world I see
The human beings who look down on me
We’re all the same or we should be

So if you see me down and out
Fill my cup
Take the words right out my mouth
A better world is what we need

Not full of lust and full of greed
Change is coming you shall see
Because man is apart of we
Diane Parrott
Joe Posadas
The day was amazingly beautiful, not a single cloud in the sky. The sun was brighter than ever, illuminating even the darkest corner. A cold breeze ran through the sky, which complemented the day in the most perfect way. It truly was magnificent. The scenery was so beautiful that you would be hypnotized if you stared at the sky for a few seconds. There is no other way to put it, truly the day was breathtaking. It is quite ironic that on that perfect day, despair was felt. Deep hate and depression consumed little Robin.

How I wish I could enjoy the day. How I wish I could get up and leave. It hurts me to know that I cannot. I am stuck here, just looking out and not being able to do anything about it. No matter how beautiful the day is, no matter how beautiful tomorrow might be, there is nothing that could make me forget.

“You need to stop thinking about it,” said his brother with a very humble voice.

“How could I?” Robin softly replied. “They just came out of nowhere and took him, how sick of them to do that.” He stayed motionless for a second, trying with all his might to stay calm, but his emotions quickly overcame him. “How repugnant of them, he was dead! How could they take him? Why would they do that?” As he finished saying that, he felt a powerful blow in the heart. What is this excruciating pain? he thought. Perhaps it was his body trying to reject a bad memory. He tried to ignore the pain and continued, “They could just have left him there. What could they have done with his body?”

His brother responded with a simple, “I know it’s hard to understand, but they probably did not know any better.”

How annoying. How can he be so calm? He was our brother. “I really don’t care, I will find them.”

“And what will you do?”

After a pause Robin finally replied, “Just leave me alone for a while.” I feel guilty. All he does is worry about me. I know he is just trying to help by talking about it, but my emotions are too strong to be contained by mere words.

Robin’s brother respected his brother’s request and turned around. After seeing this, Robin turned around as well. He tried to focus on the
beauty the world brought. He glanced at the distance, but could only focus on the tragedy that happened only a few days ago.

*Nature, why must you mock me? That day was as pretty as today. All three of us happy together; our cohesiveness only made the day better. Together we were strong and could stand the fact that for most of the day, our mother was gone. That day, our mother came home early. My brothers and I were all surprised, but extremely happy nonetheless. After the long hug that filled our hearts with joy our mother began making gagging sounds. We stood back. As she continued gagging she created strange sounds that were more and more intense as she went on. Finally she regurgitated a muddy-looking substance. Overall, it looked slimy, but I could see small chunks of food. I stared at the lumps, but could not make out what they were. It truly was disgusting, but I could not look away.*

*“Don’t just stare, come and eat,” our mother said weakly. As soon as she said that, I don’t know what came over us, but we dashed to the small pool of stomach stew and started devouring it without stopping. It may seem a little gross, but trust me, it was very delicious. The best meal I had in days. In fact it was so tasty that I was panting as I finished. I ate it so fast I didn’t have time to breath. I felt blessed to have a mother, who would starve in order to feed us. I don’t know much of the world beyond my home, but I imagine that there is limited food out there. My poor mother might only find enough for her, but to satisfy her desire to eat, she consumes what she finds, but still has to feed her young. So she has no choice, but to puke her food. I appreciate her sacrifice. That is why her vomit tasted so good. At that moment I wanted to give her a hug. I was about to, but stopped when I saw her grab my youngest brother. I was confused as what she was going to do with him. I sensed something was wrong as she started dragging him. I couldn’t move. I just stared in horror as I realized what she was doing. My little brother realized much earlier as he began screaming as soon as she began dragging him. I can still hear his screams of horror, telling our mother to let him go.*

*“Please, Mom, no! I’m not ready. You can’t do this to me. Please, Mom, no!”* 

*I could not understand why she was doing this. All my life I thought she was a saint, but I realized that she was something completely different. She had my brother dangling over the edge. At any moment now I sensed that she would release him. A sudden rush filled my entire body as I saw our mother let him go. Upon seeing that, I ran to where she was. The horror was too much, but I stared as my brother got closer to his death.*
I saw him screaming, flapping his arms as if trying to fly. It was no use. His body began picking up speed as he got closer to the ground. When he finally hit the ground and I saw his body bounce as he made contact with the concrete, I felt a deep pain in my heart. A mixture of emotions filled my tiny heart; was it dissolution, pain, or sadness? I did not know, but I couldn’t breathe, I couldn’t move, I couldn’t blink; all my attention was on him. I snapped out of it when I saw a little boy and girl at a distance. They approached my brother. I screamed with all my might to leave him alone. I wanted to jump off too, but I knew better. All I could do was wait and see as the two picked him up and take him away.

“Why would you do that?” I yelled at my mother.

Sorry was all she said as she took off and left. She hasn’t returned since, but I know she is watching us, because there is food every morning to last my brother and me all day. I cannot blame my mother for what she did. I’m sure she had a good reason. Perhaps I’m too young to understand and that is why she didn’t even try to explain. I will seek answers when I’m older, but as for right now I’ll drown in sad memories.

Just as Robin finished that thought he noticed two figures at a distance. He stared at them until he recognized them. It was the little boy and girl! Something must have snapped inside him because upon seeing them he stood on the edge, looked down, and jumped.

The little boy and girl approached a huge tree.

“This is where we found the little bird the other day, remember?” said the girl.

“Yes, I remember. We buried it in our backyard,” said the boy.

“We’re such good people,” said the girl smiling.

The boy smiled as he looked up. At that moment he noticed a bird jump out of its nest. He noticed how the bird struggled to flaps its wings, but quickly managed to soar into the sky. He thought how beautiful it was to see the bird fly around above them. However, his smile quickly faded as the bird flew towards them. The boy and girl sensed danger. They ran and screamed, but not before the little robin drew blood. With pain in their heads they ran as fast as they could. With blood in its beak, the bird chased after them, picking at their heads every chance he received. Finally poor little Robin was able to enjoy the day. Finally he found those who took his brother. Perhaps tomorrow he will go find his mother.
**Patricia Skewes / Over It**

Focus on the task ahead; I’ve bled
sweat and tears to get through these years
The years I wanted to be a dancer not knowing what a lover was
The years I wanted to be a rebel curious what a lover does
Please help me rise to the occasion. I promise I won’t fail you
So when I’m on top, I will reveal the truth
That I am strong, and I can do this thing called life
to get through these days of strife
to get through all the negative energy
yea I’m undeniably me.
I’ll never forget it and I’ll never regret it.
I begin with a steady state model of the universe and attempt to explain the phenomena of electricity and magnetism as well as cosmic background radiation and the expansion of the universe.

I believe the universe began as a sea of neutrons, the smallest three-dimensional pieces of matter. The neutrons were spread evenly throughout space all equal distances from each other. Slowly the neutrons began to gravitate into aggregate masses and these bodies moved by each other through space.

When these bodies grew to sufficient gravity they began to pull apart and break the free neutrons caught between them into one and two-dimensional pieces. Electrons and protons were formed.

One neutron can only be broken into one proton and one electron. They cannot be recombined. Electrons and protons cannot be broken down further.

While the neutron is the smallest possible three-dimensional particle, the proton is two-dimensional and the electron is one-dimensional. The proton has two ends but no time or distance between its two sides. The electron has only one side like a front with no back.

The proton and electron are attracted to each other by gravity but because the proton has no middle or center, the electron flies by and can’t back up because the electron has no back. So the electron must turn around and fly by the proton again. The two particles are caught in a cycle. This energy creates a spark.

Two like particles (protons or electrons) repel because they have no centers and gravity is measured from the center of two objects. So the like particles pull each other from side to side but cannot touch. Since the neutron is in a low energy state and the proton and electron are in higher energy states in order to fill three dimensions, magnetism is the result of the proton and electron trying to join to achieve a lower energy state.

The sea of neutrons is endless and will always rain down particles in the form of background radiation. The universes move by each other with great speed and stretch, pulling their galaxies along with them. This makes it seem like the universe is expanding. I propose that the universes move through space faster than the speed of light so relativity does not apply. If matter cannot be destroyed then time cannot be altered from its course.
Robert Hall / Scavengers

Crows pass. A sign of death

Black men in black pants and black hoodies
a car creeps carefully and slowly down the street

try not to startle the prey
No longer crows they are predators
Not scavengers looking to pick carcasses for loose change

Their beaks start to caw!

The loudest screams to assert their dominance

No longer crows.
They have evolved . . .
Escalated
Miriam Best / Undaunted by the Intruder

Meanwhile, back at the apartment, Emilia fidgeted frantically in her sleep. Was it a dream or actually happening? When she awakened, she propped herself up, trying to recall the vision she had seen. Suddenly, she felt a cool trickle down the back of her foot, like steam gliding down a glass shower door. Moving the blanket off of her feet, she felt dampness under her foot of the bed as she dragged her leg up to swipe the sensation away.

In the darkness she saw a darkened area that held no color. Her first thought was blood. Hastily and startled, she reached for the gold-plated drawstring of the night-stand lamp. Yanking it quite hard unintentionally, the light lit up the room and then once again there was complete darkness. The lamp clashed and clanked then plundered to the ground, breaking the light bulb—she screamed like a little girl who saw monsters in the closet. Laughing to herself, she said, “Get it together, Lia!” for the rain and thunder were a few of her fears.

Feeling through the darkness for her bedroom slippers, her fingers ran across one and then the other. Placing them on her feet, and calming herself, she got up to turn on the bathroom light. At that very moment, lightning cracked and illuminated the bathroom window.

For a moment she didn’t hear the rain falling, but the trickles of rain left a drizzled message on the window of non-connected words and it appeared to read HELP ME PLEASE. Another scream gurgled in her throat but there was no sound. The only sound now was the rain popping on the roof’s gutter . . . and her pounding heart, which made her shirt seem to rise and fall against her chest. She felt like a victim about to be murdered by an intruder.

Slamming the switch up, she heard the fairy light face plate crack, and the small winged piece chimed as it struck the ground. Frustrated, she wanted to scream again. What more could happen, she thought? She was alone! In the dark, and apparently the power was out as she flicked the switch up and down several times, and the alarm clock in the bathroom blinked 4:37.

Then a stinging pain pierced her pinky finger. Raising her hand up she felt a warm trickle and saw a red-brown streak of blood. She briskly walked to the sink to wash her hand, and the water dribbled clear and then brown for there was no light. She watched the water run clean and turned the faucet off.

Gently pinching her finger between her lips as she left the bathroom, she wondered if she had overslept, or if she had had enough sleep. Work had kept her many nights hunched over writing, leaving streaks of mascara. Finishing a cup of coffee was rare because she pushed through until the work was complete. Lately she was falling behind in her normal agenda, for living alone was her best friend. Most of her comfort came from long bubble bath
soaks and wine as she sweat out toxins of her miserable, forlorn life. The only thing that caught her fancy was the children at the sanctuary for children where she volunteered to receive a certificate in Early Childhood Education. With just twenty-three hours more or less to complete, she saw a glimpse of a better future.

A noise from the kitchen struck sudden fear that made her body hot. The adrenalin rush coursed through her veins, like formaldehyde flushing through the system of the deceased. Her body stiffened erect, motionlessly, both hoping and not hoping she would hear the noise again just to make sure. She stared at her sofa bed debating to get back in. She thought that to shut her eyes would wake her from the nightmare. The thought was strong enough that she hurriedly plunged under an opened part of the heaped blanket and covered herself like a cocoon until she felt no draft. She was warm and felt safe. Closing her eyes tightly for a few seconds, she pleaded that what was happening was all a dream and when she awoke, there would be no broken lamp, or cracked light fixture, nor the words streaked on the window. She mumbled, “Please protect me, guardian angels, please protect me!” several times and opened her eyes still finding nothing but darkness and her solitude.

Unreceptive to listen, she indeed heard the noise once again. She feared to move for her safety. If she breathed shallowly, would the intruder just take what he wanted and leave her be, or would she have to fight for her life? She thought carefully what to do if it called for her to act upon defending her life.

Gliding her palm flat for her cell phone she slept with like a teddy bear, her fingers met it pushing it off the bed against the wall.

“Sssshi- t!” she cried in a shudder, as she held back from swearing. “God help me!”

To her dismay, through the blanket fibers she saw a soft glow just north of her head toward her bathroom and then heard pounding music from upstairs.

“Thank you,” she expressed desperately and writhed out of the blanket.

Looking at the broken fragments of the G&E light bulb, she headed for the kitchen for her dust buster. Before she made it to the door, she remembered to grab her cell phone, which had not fallen to the floor yet. It was trapped between the mattress and wall. As she shifted the bed the phone dropped; she grabbed it, turning it over to see not even a missed call or text. She turned the volume up and there in her hand chimed an incoming message. Extrinsic to the matter, she opened the message box and it read, CONTACT SERVICE PROVIDER FOR SERVICE.

“At least I can dial 911...” she said sarcastically.

She flipped the wall switch down and left the room aggravated at her poverty. Emilia wanted to throw the phone in disgust, but held on to it and jammed in into her sweater pocket. She could barely manage to eat as healthy as she preferred and moreover she could not afford the commute to
school, which she considered to be work because of being unemployed due to temporary medical conditions. Graduating from school would be her pay-off or perhaps even the book she began writing for over a month would become a nationwide novel or a hit movie.

She headied for the kitchen to get the wireless vacuum cleaner she had come across while taking a walk. It was in perfect condition except for the crack at the base. She wondered why people just threw stuff away instead of putting it on a table, or tagging it with a FREE sign. She grabbed it off the base and gave a few vroom-vroom sounds to test the power. It wasn’t much but was enough for the tiny fragments that looked like broken eggshells.

After the mess was cleaned up, she proceeded to the kitchen to put away the mini-vacuum. The thunder rumbled and rain pounded hard on the rooftop like she had never heard and even splatted at the window; then lightning struck something horribly loud, taking the power once again. Balancing on her toes as if someone had pushed her from behind, she was frazzled by the fear she had felt earlier when her imagination was dragging her into a flurry. The hallway seemed like a mile into the kitchen. She became saddened and grieved, silently crying these words, “It would be nice to have someone here to be with me, Lord, why am I alone? Will it be like this all my life?”

From failed relationships with men, she believed that it would be best to stay single. Was her vibe off to men? Even the few girlfriends she had shunned her because her path of life had changed from what they were used to by her. For many years, Emilia longed for nights of passion with a man who would help her and not abuse her kindness. It wasn’t just nights of passion she pined for, but she wanted someone to speak with, the type of man that only wanted her like a classic fairy tale, “The Little Mermaid.” Emilia also had a deep secret that even when the thought crept into her head it scared her. She feared death and did not want to die.

At that moment she wanted to hear music, so she played a recorded version, “Soul mate” by Natasha Bedingfield, from her cell phone and sang along, for singing was also a hobby. Though lately, she thought it would be best for her to pass on and be in heaven, soaring and floating in the air like she sometimes dreamed. The world held nothing for her and she did not know her purpose in life.

Suddenly she was in silence with tears of abandonment and staring at her feet. The fear she had had from all of her fears disappeared as if they never were there. This feeling was different. Emilia wiped her tears and when she pulled her face up she saw a glimmer that lit a ray of light coming from the pantry.

Fearless, she made her way into the kitchen, for no one could enter her house past the alarm system and dead bolts. The closer she got to the kitchen she smelled rain. What was this glow coming from? Then she remembered the base of the vacuum had a light but the power was off, so what could it be? Just as she was passing the refrigerator, her foot became
soaked by an icy cold liquid. She looked down and saw that she was standing in a puddle of water.

“Dagnabit!” she yelled, prying her foot up like a cat does when in contact with water. After that her life was about to change.

The smell coming from the pantry was rain, and lots of it. As she passed the refrigerator, the power surged on and she turned around to turn the switch on at the kitchen entrance. Emilia, hobbled on her right heel and now free of fear, walked to the pantry for the mop and there on the floor was a naked man, whose body looked warm to touch but was soaked by rain. The glow he held was angelic as his eyes. Undaunted, she stared at him unembarrassed by his nakedness. Not a smile or a timid look was expressed. It was serenity. He stood up dripping rain and said . . .

“I am here for you and never will leave, unless you ask me to. Will you help me?”

Aghast and focused on him, her eyes rolled up and before she collapsed to the ground in a faint, he caught her in his arms and lay there with her until she awoke. . .
Lori Stanley / Wild Flag

Wild Flag
Waving—
Hello, goodbye

Nothing stays,
As new things
Are introduced.

Just one of them,
Another guy
In this group.

Is this what I wanted?
What I would prefer?
Maybe, just maybe.

But, I need more.
I want more.
I am more.

Just a girl.
Waving,
Hello, goodbye.
Holding hands and whispering
Like roots and leaves and winter winds
Intertwined the mystery
Something I don’t understand
But I guess there’s no need…some things impossible to read
Heavenly grace beside me
I stand alone, a man yet,
Together we row this catamaran,
Through the endless haze of bittersweet
Just a poem, it’s still unjust
Unfinished and left to rust
I feel the cold wind calling me back now
Holding hands and whispering
These melodies call the gods’ names
Not so well I play the gods’ games
I’m swept away, relentlessly
Jessica Guzman
Sadia Sakhi
There are three things in life; I can say without strife—
my father did for me:
The first is easy, he showed me a book—
he brought Robert Service to me.
Where the stories spin tales of “The Lonely Trail”
and “The Men That Don’t Fit In”
And if you ever get a chance, to read about Sam—
have a tear or two and grin.

Thinkin’ about my dad, and the things that aimed my path,
and swayed my many ways:
Was sitting in the woods, while watching the birds—fly, to and fro.
From a pine full of holes, peckerwood holes—
where the beetles, flee the show,
And the endless swipe, from the tree to the sky—
from my mind, it will never go.

It was the infinite flight; of red, black, and white—
of the woodpeckers, going to and fro.
Just layin’ on a bench, in the mountains with my Pop,
our entertainers were all around;
Just don’t make a sound, be quiet, and you might—
hear a cedar, fall to the ground.
It’s a lumberjacks ghost, or a tree getting old—
maybe, we’ll never know.

Though I know I also liked, the humorous side—
sarcastic yet funny to me.
But the best of these, was the combination of three—
it was surprising alchemy
For all things stirred, collected and cured—gave sum of who I am,
Although some may not know, I am here to show—I know you gave a damn!
Ernie Brewer Jr. / Processes of Individuation

I am changing forces, by leaning contorted,
With the immensity of space generating in me,
Those transcendental feelings, revealing my intensity.

The fabric will not let them intervene.

Hiding behind a false belief, it’s time we realign our memories
For there are forces pulling us, flowing through our substance and bones
While you have many reasons to be skeptical, of a veiled hologram of superposition,
an arrow to my heart, while social change runs amuck.

And if we could just see through
to the architecture of this matrix,
we could deprogram.

I sat still in meditation, appearing to me,
Manifesting, in your substance and bones
Evolution in our hands, metamorphoses in our heads.

So I will feel all around, slightly sensing out
A field that is all around, suspension of the self,
slightly sensing we’re migrating toward the higher realm,
In the here and now.
It was a quiet morning out on the marshes. The birds were making their daily rounds about the swamp, seeking whatever food might poke its head out of the evergreen water. The hour itself was seemingly peaceful; the bomb- ings had ceased the night before and the deathly scent of blood had slowly dissipated throughout the evening. The sky was a luminescent blue, and there wasn’t a hint of bad weather to be felt by anyone on their march. Due to the battle of the previous day, the taste of smoke and the sensation of devastation still wafted about the valley in a dizzying frenzy. This feeling of darkness still crept through the hearts of the men at the encampment; though few soldiers had been lost in the preceding fight, the screams of agony and the roaring of the explosions maintained their vice grip over the petrified recruits, torturing them as if it were an angered giant. The bitterness of the rotting corpses could be recognized on the lips of any soldier, and the bodies from which those smells illuminated lay strewn about the battlefield. Some of the fallen dead could be seen without their heads; some without their legs, arms, or any other matter of easily disposed body parts; a few of the opposing forces had somehow been ripped several yards from their trenches and were found floating in the swamps nearby, now absent of any signs of life. The enemy fighters had been slaughtered in the previous day’s fight, and the blood from their drained remains was everywhere, covering the field in a dark blanket of red.

John Maches was one of the surviving men in the victorious legion; like the rest of his fellow soldiers, John was still locked in a state of confusion and remained frightened at what had occurred the previous day. Even though John had been fighting in this never-ending war for nearly a decade, he now found himself as the last of his companions to maintain a shred of humanity, yet his fading hope of relief continued to drift away amidst this longstanding chaos. A skilled soldier, John was constantly idolized by his comrades for both his bravery on the battlefield as well as for his uncanny ability to take up arms against their enemies. In spite of his relentless precision in battle, however, he was far from fearless, and the constant prospect of his own demise had ordered him into a state of perpetual determination to survive, perhaps explaining why he was extremely capable in the heat of the fight.

“Alright, break’s over men, time to move out,” commanded General Leer, stifling his speech due to an apparent ailment.

The men loved General Leer, as he had been with them ever since their regiment was formed and had consistently proven himself to be a capable leader. Sadly, he had become increasingly erratic at his duties because of his sickness – the men under his command had heard rumblings of it being Parkinson’s disease, though Leer would never admit to it – and the soldiers feared that he would soon perish. In the face of their approaching hopelessness, the men looked to the memory of Leer in his prime, when he
had pushed them to succeed at their training routines and had shown them how to overcome the evils of this fight. Unfortunately, his faltering speech and unsteady hands attested to his ailing condition, and it would not be long before his disease would finally get the best of him. Like all things that the men had come to cherish, Leer too would ultimately fade away.

“You heard the man,” yelled John to the rest of the group, quickly recognizing the soldiers’ desires to rest a little longer, “We have to go.” John realized that more opposing forces would soon arrive, as the fallen enemies from the previous day would have called for reinforcements in the face of their imminent destruction.

There were twelve men in addition to General Leer in the regiment; prior to the earlier battle, they had been on their way to assist another band of soldiers in evacuating a village. Begrudgingly, the men gathered their guns, their ammunition, and their deteriorating spirits and continued towards their destination, slowly making their way through the marsh. The men were exhausted due to the struggles of the day before, yet they could not assuage themselves due to the scarcity of food and water.

Several more hours had passed by the time the men reached the village, and they quickly found themselves locked in the cover of darkness. With his squinting eyes, John could make out the ruins of the town from several yards away.

“No,” he thought to himself, “we’re too late. The village is lost.”

Immediately, the devastation that had been done to the village was clear. The buildings lay in ruins, undoubtedly caused by a sudden bombardment; the masses of the strewn pieces of destroyed architecture lay blackened and toppled over each other, and the road that had once lead into the town was nonexistent, instead replaced by a series of deep pits formed by the exploding grenades. This place had been annihilated.

The corpses were seemingly innumerable. No distinction could be made between the fallen bodies of women and children, of soldiers and civilians, as each had been equally laid to waste by the roar of the bombs. As it had been in the marsh, the peoples’ remains lay scattered around the destroyed village, forging an immense feeling of dread amongst John and his fellow soldiers. Here, the unfortunate souls lay barren, robbed of their existence and forced to lie forever in a pit of obscurity; they could never have realized what had befallen them, for this was a surprise attack. Moreover, the taste of blood could be found drifting in the wind, finding its way onto the parched lips of all of the remaining men. General Leer quickly recognized the urgency of the situation, for it was obvious that this was a recent attack.

“All right men,” the struggling general ordered, “gear up and search for survivors. There might be a few still left alive.”

All of the soldiers were quick to obey this command, desperate to save anybody that might have survived. John immediately thought the same as General Leer and started to worry about their current position, as the enemies might return at any time; still, he found himself having to push those
considerations aside for the moment in order to concentrate on helping any survivors. In the wake of all this destruction, the men split up and began to search the village.

The effort ultimately proved to be in vain, however, as the town and its occupants had indeed been massacred. Despair flooded the hearts of the soldiers, leading them even more to seek justice through the eventual defeat of the enemy.

“We were too late,” General Leer announced to his men. “Try not to dwell on your experiences here for too long, as they will one day drag you to your grave.”

The mood of the village quickly turned to one of depression; as the soldiers took to their rest in the scattered remains, they quickly became uneasy in the harsh bitterness and decay of the ruined environment. To the men, death now seemed infinite, and the taste of blood once more came to the company’s lips, now facilitated by the raging winds of destruction. With nowhere else to go, the soldiers had to spend the evening in the remains of the darkened city.

The night passed uneasily amongst the soldiers, who were upset at the conditions of the village. The corpses strewn about the city had begun to attract a seemingly endless swarm of flies, driving the men mad with irritation and disgust. The winds grew harsher, blowing the undying stench of the rotting bodies into the encampment of the platoon, further enhancing their aggression. The taste of blood and smoke grew stronger with each passing minute, making the company weary of their dreadful dispositions. The night was miserable.

By the time morning approached, the soldiers were extremely anxious to leave the ruined village and to finally abandon their overwhelming feelings of deathly dread and dismay. Bitter and temporarily displaced, the men started to gather their belongings and prepared to return to their headquarters. General Leer used his radio to call in the status of the company as well as the fate of the village, and the soldiers began the return journey towards their base, excited at the prospect of finally receiving some relief.

John looked at his fellow men and saw their saddened faces, their broken spirits, and their ruined hearts, suddenly coming to a quiet realization. “Nothing ever lasts,” he thought to himself. “There is no good or evil, no right or wrong, no life or death. There is just our little band of men and our desire to have a meaningful life. There are no such things as falsities or malice, merely a select group of people striving to achieve something more.”

As the platoon reentered the marshes, they could see that enemy soldiers were a mere hundred yards away, progressing slowly towards their position.

General Leer ordered the men to prepare for an attack. “Be wary, men,” the old general declared, “of the capabilities of our enemies. Know them as you know yourselves. Do not hesitate in your actions. Now, fire!”
Becoming the girl I thought I’d never be
the one to wait around for the next round
Being foolish enough to fall for a creep
holding my tongue and not make a sound

Used to be the girl that had options
had higher expectations and standards
Only willing to fill his expectations
knowing if it happened it would be a bastard

Was the girl that stood strong with high hopes
now losing control of thoughts that drive one insane
With him drifting away from problems in one stroke
Always ending our talks with “I’m glad you came”

Being the stupid girl that ignores the signs of rejection
knowing and being told these are all games and tricks
But reacting unusual as if he was an infection
Seeing myself become just “that one girl” makes me sick

What happened to the strength I once held to be so blunt
hanging my head low in the shame as he leaves content
Enjoying how easily he’s made this one heart so sunk
Only for him have I become so patient

Foolish little girl I’ve become
some shake the truth out of him
Maybe my assuming has gone so wrong
will Karma finally win?

One day the truth will come.
as for now, Foolish child is all I am
Allyson Ford / Normalcy

The normal me just is not me
Not too sure who you see
But that is how life chooses to be
I try and I endlessly try
Just cannot go beyond the shy
Now I am just too old
Tomorrow really cannot be sold
It feels as if the years tripled
When I only begged they would have doubled
Isolation companies my misery, perfectly
It is hard moving on from the edge of insanity
Cause all that is left is taunting memory
That continuously haunts
Only getting want it wants
I try to convince myself
That I am not who I once was
It is like evil inside waiting
It will come back no matter what I am creating
I am scared, damn near terrified
All my life I have justified
For a creature behind my eyes
No one knows the darkness that lies
It has no verbs, nouns, or ways
I cannot explain it, but it stays
I am sure until my dying days
Suddenly, there was a beautiful animal
in my headlights, glued to the road
like a statue, unable to stir—
frozen in harm’s way with fright.
It knew it was in perilous straits
and so did I; but also, that danger
was looming for me, as well.
We stared at each other, wide-eyed—
fearful in our mutual horror.
Then I skidded to a stop,
the deer bounded into the forest—
and I took two long, ragged breaths.
Raquel Fiorello / Your Rarity

We all start off with a clean slate
As we age, our innocence deteriorates
Influences from any existing personality
These exist in every reality
How you present yourself is not a debate
What matters is the good character you demonstrate
Identifying ourselves begins as a riddle
Eventually, self-realization will trickle
Never consider your morals to be a thing to negotiate
You know who you are, that is how the world will relate
Whether it accepts you or not is up to fate
Don’t sacrifice your rarity to compensate
Who you are is one thing you should demand everyone
to appreciate.
Elizabeth Smith / I Am

I am a heart.

I wonder if I will ever get broken.

I hear the music of my beats.

I see the people that try to damage me.

I want to be loved.

I am a heart.

I pretend that I am perfect.

I feel the blood that rushes through my veins.

I touch the body that I lay inside.

I worry that someday I will get broken.

I cry when I feel the pain of being hurt.

I am a heart.

I understand that I am very delicate.

I say that you should always follow your heart.

I dream of being a survivor.

I try to give unconditional love.

I hope to never get ripped out of the chest
   and ripped into millions of pieces.

I am a heart.
Alicia Whitaker / The Page

I stare at an empty page
it contains nothing and yet
everything . . .
It’s all there looking back
at me
Showing past, present, and future
I only need to keep looking
It can be anything I want
anything I think
Yet somethimes that empty page
pulls me in . . .
I lose focus
I fall
I become empty