

# Anamnesis



The MPC Literary Magazine

~Issue 2~

**Anamnesis:** is recollection; reminiscence. When you see the old man on the bench in the park who is holding a piece of bread in his hand over the frustrated pigeons, his eyes lost and glassy and full as the lake that lies in front of him, this a person drowning in anamnesis: he is remembering. When, as in the fictional stories of this magazine, you look back at your life, back at the times when you found yourself disrupting the bathing of goddesses, drinking heaven, engineering creatures that were entirely too large, or running for or from your life, towards or away from your family, you are participating in anamnesis. Even though some of it isn't your own and some of it isn't true. But certainly that shouldn't make it less beautiful, less wondrous. And certainly, by holding such a clearly labeled noun in your hands, you can't say we didn't warn you.

-Sarah Goodman

### ~Managing Editors~

Sarah Goodman, Sandra Videmsky

*This issue of the MPC Literary Magazine is dedicated to Sandra Videmsky, who not only helped to found the Creative Writing Club and served as its president last semester, but who also spearheaded the efforts of the first Literary Magazine, as well as a great deal of this one. Though she has flown the coop now, her friends here still follow in her example and would like to present this issue as a macaroni picture of our appreciation of everything she has done for us.*

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## **Submissions**

The MPC Literary Magazine is published by The Creative Writing Club of Monterey Peninsula College and considers submissions of poetry, fiction and nonfiction (memoir or personal essay) from MPC students. All submissions are read by the members of the club who serve as staff.

The deadline for submissions for the third issue of the magazine is March 1st 2012. Please submit up to 3 poems and/or up to 6 pages of prose as an email attachment in .rtf, .doc or .docx format to: [CreativeWritingClub@mpc.edu](mailto:CreativeWritingClub@mpc.edu)

Indicate Poetry, Fiction or Nonfiction Submission in the subject heading of your email.

## The Regulator

The first time I saw them, they were only a red and yellow blur zipping across the classroom. That was somewhere in Week Five of the semester. The five-day-a-week pace of Algebra had taken a toll on me, and the 6:00 am wake-ups to get to class each day made for sixteen hour days. I found myself in a haze. I was no longer fully awake, and when I slept it was rarely a deep sleep. Driving to school and walking to class seemed more like a dream each day. So on that morning of the fifth week, when I saw the red and yellow blur, I figured I was more asleep than awake. It was in the sixth week on the Friday test that I saw the blur a couple of times. One time I got a good look.

From my seat in the back row I saw the red and yellow blur rush up to a blond girl sitting in the second row. The blur stopped to reveal a short, bald, pale-skinned man wearing red cover-alls and a yellow long-sleeved shirt. He placed one hand of the top of her head and the other just behind her left ear, and then he slowly rubbed her head. Then he vanished. The girl didn't notice, but then I saw that she was having difficulty with the problem she was working on. About ten minutes later I saw the blur again, racing to a guy wearing a black ball cap sitting up in the first row. The man was back, and again he rubbed the head of this student before disappearing. Again the guy in the black ball cap seemed to become frustrated over the problem he was working on. The strange little man made two more appearances that morning.

I knew I'd seen him, but I wasn't sure what was going on. Nobody else seemed to notice the little guy so I kept my mouth shut. I talked to the guy in the black ball cap; he said he was cruising along on the test when suddenly his mind went blank, and he got pissed off because it was such an easy problem. Two weeks later when the next test came I stayed alert, but I didn't seem him. A couple of classmates seemed to become agitated

while trying to solve problems, and it seemed to come out of nowhere. I shook it off; I was tired, and the combination of work and school must have been zapping my brain. The following two weeks were rough. I had to cover multiple shifts at the bar I work at, and that meant not getting to bed before 2:00a.m. So when the next test rolled around, I was a zombie.

As I plotted points on a grid I saw the red and yellow blur streak past me. This time the little man stopped behind the guy who played on the football team. He rubbed the guy's head, and the guy became frustrated. The little man turned, and he had a satisfied look on his face until he saw me staring at him. He smiled and gave me a casual wave. Then he vanished into a ribbon of red and yellow. I sat back for a second and looked around the room. Nobody stirred from their work so I figured I was the only one who'd seen him. I shrugged and leaned forward to resume the test. There was a neatly folded paper on top of my test. I opened it. There was a brief message written neatly inside:

*Meet me in the men's room in the school library's basement  
after class.*

*Questions will be answered.*

*A friend*

I slid the note into my pocket and finished the test. Ten minutes later I was in the library, walking into the basement-level men's room. At first it appeared empty, and I walked to the end, checking the stalls. Then the door's lock clicked behind me, and there he was. He stood about five feet tall. His red over-alls sported an emblem of geometric shapes with what I assumed were letters of a language I'd never seen before. His face was shaped like the letter "V", and his almond-shaped eyes were the deepest blue I'd ever seen.

“Hello” I said. The sound of my voice surprised me.

“Hello to you,” he replied. His voice was deeper than I’d expected. “My name is Sam, Agent Sam,” he continued. I stood there for a second not sure what to say, and then I just opened my mouth.

“Should I be afraid of you?” I said.

“No,” Agent Sam said.

“Why are you here? Why can’t anyone see you?”

“I come from a future, not *the future*, but a possible future,” he said. His voice was calm.

“So why here, why a college math class?”

“I’m a temporal regulator. I’m here to make sure mankind advances at a reasonable rate.”

“By screwing up algebra tests scores?”

“Yes. This was the simplest solution. Nobody gets hurt, and progress still happens. Just at a manageable rate.”

I paused in mid-thought to look at Agent Sam. He looked at me too. I didn’t feel threatened I just felt like something he was observing in a museum. Then I had a thought.

“You said you come from a future, but not *the future*. That implies that at one point you did come from the future, and you’re here to fix a mistake,” I said. Agent Sam cocked his head and smiled.

“You are right. Mankind let technology get out of control. Advances were made before the collective wisdom could catch up. Cloning, nanotech, and fusion came too fast leading to horrible things.”

I stood there for a few seconds. I realized I didn’t want to know more, and I told him that. As long as I wasn’t going crazy, I told him, I could live with his visits. I would never tell a soul.

“I can’t erase your memory, but I can make it so you sleep better each night,” he said. I smiled for the first time. I told him sleep would be more than a fair trade for my silence, and he placed his warm hands on each side of my head. There was a brief buzzing, and then Sam was gone.

Sam did the trick. It didn’t matter if I slept four hours or eight; I woke up ready to go. This meant that I’d never see Agent Sam again, but I looked forward to test days. I’d always smile when a classmate suffered a brain-fart, and I’d chuckle when it would happen to me. Later on I wondered how many times in the past had I been visited by Agent Sam and his friends. How many break-downs during tests had been their work? Did it matter? I decided it didn’t, and rarely thought about it or Agent Sam. Somehow the sunsets seemed brighter, with more color. That’s the future calling, and it’s going to be alright.

By Marc Ferris



## ***Abuelita***

My grandmother was a beautifully silver-haired woman who was married for fifty-four years, raised fourteen children, and worked from the age of three until she was not able to. She was an extraordinary woman, one that I dearly miss, and I often look back at the lessons she taught us.

She once told me a story of her rolling pin, an object that seems to be the symbol of her to her seventy-two grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren. When she was three she began to work to help provide for her family. She learned to make flour tortillas and sell them. She learned early that if you could make something, you would always have work.

Her work experience was wide and random. She ironed and kept house for wealthy aristocrats, worked in the hot and humid cotton fields, and put her handy hoe to work in the agricultural *corridas*, or runs, of the west— she grew green onions, radishes, lettuce, potatoes, – a true pioneer. She even worked in the restaurant business, of which she said, “I know what happens there! I’d rather cook and know what I am eating!”

Grandma Beatrice would create something out of nothing. She would clothe her children with the material from the flour sacks without a sewing machine, working by hand till the late hours of the night. When she didn’t have the means to give her little ones sweet treats, she created a bread called *pan tonto*, “crazy bread”. Not one her of fourteen children know the recipe, but all remember the taste and texture of this wild, out-of-her-mind bread.

The love she had for God fueled her service of teaching the Bible for twenty years. Grandma Beatrice lived and walked what she taught. Her house was always full of people: no one

was turned away, no matter what their story was or what crimes they had committed against her.

At times her house would be so full that you would find people in the hallway. I recall by mother telling my older brother to go to sleep and him replying, "I can't find any parking." Grandma Beatrice would say from the other room where to go. She knew without having to see. Grandma knew her house inside and out, even when one of her knick-knacks was moved, even a smidge.

She would have stories to tell to anyone who was willing to listen, and as she sat in her favorite chair by the entrance to her house, crocheting away, she never looked up unless she was making a point. In one of her stories, Grandma Beatrice was out on a farm, and many of the workers were hungry, but no one had food. She happened to have a big pot in her truck and an oversized potato that had been thrown off to the side of the field, which her boss had said she could have. While others were complaining, she put the potato in the pot. Someone came up and asked if they could put in an onion that they had. She nodded as she put in some salt that someone else had given her. A man came running and handed her an ox tail that the owner of the farm had thrown out. As people gathered, each contributing to the soup pot, the complaining ceased and laughter ran through the farm. That was my grandma, always finding a solution.

I would ask her to make me a blanket, and she would say, "No, I will teach you how." She would be planting some sort of produce, and I would be leaning on her favorite hoe. Grandma would say, "Don't lean, work! Let me show you." Everything that I asked for turned into a teaching moment. It has taken me ten years after her death to understand her philosophy and what she tried to teach me: find a solution. If there is a need, fill it. And work hard at being the best at what you do. But to do it with love and a smile.

By Sadie Calamaco

## Summer Chalk

It was one of those summer days, where it was so hot it took all the fun out of *not* being in school. Plus we weren't allowed to run around because the smog was so bad that it would make your lungs burn like crazy. So my best friend Dede and I decided we would cover the entire wall that separated our driveway from the alley behind our house with chalk art. After a couple of hours, we were sticky with chalk and sweat and a little bored. So, we decided to hoist each other up on the wall, and survey the alleyway behind our house.

The alley was kinda creepy. Nobody ever drove down it. On a very rare occasion we would use it as a short cut, like on a dare or something. We would ride our bikes at top speed, or run like someone was chasing us, cuz it kinda felt like someone was. Usually though, we avoided it completely. We'd rather ride or walk the extra half block, to avoid the feeling of weirdness that floated down its darkened path. Plus, it was full of potholes and loose gravel that just ended getting kicked up into your shoes or pants, annoyingly uncomfortable.

As the sun went down the light was kind of changing, so the neighborhood had that cool orange hue that brings with it a little relief from the sweltering heat. We were tattooing each other's arms and legs and faces with chalk when we heard, to our surprise, a car coming down the alley towards us. It was old, a dirty brown color, and dented, with missing hubcaps, and a huge crack down the middle of the windshield. Suddenly, that creepy feeling in the alley got really big. The car slowed down for a second a few feet from where we were perched, and then just kept driving. We started giggling with nervous laughter, looking at each other in a way that would prove neither of us was scared.

"Let's get some lemonade," Dede said.

We both jumped off the wall lickity split. We ran it the house screaming and laughing and comparing body art.

“What are you two doing inside before dark?” My mom asked.

“Oh nothin’. We’re just thirsty. May we please have some lemonade?” I asked in my most super polite voice.

“Of course you can, sweet pea, as long as you promise to run along till dark. Mommy has a lot to get done before Dede’s family comes over for dinner tonight. And you two need to hose off, outside, before you come back into this house.”

“All right, mom,” I said rolling my eyes so only Dede could see.

“Here you go,” my mom said, looking at me with one of those looks that said, my word, how do you get so dirty!!!

We happily tore back outside, ready to get back up on the wall and conquer the alley. No sooner were we up in position, than that old junky car started back down the alley way. Like it had been waitin’ at the far end of the alley to see if we were gonna come back to the wall. Dede and I looked at each other defiantly and watched as the clunky, old beater made its way down the alley again. This time it stopped, and this greasy, fat, old man leaned over the wide front seat to roll down the window. Dede and I took hold of each other’s hands and squeezed tightly.

“Excuse me, little ladies, I’m lost,” he said.

A rancid smell, like heated trash and smoke, came pouring out of the car.

“Where you trying to go?” I said in a snotty kinda way.

Dede looked at me with huge, angry eyes that told me I should not, for any reason, be talking to this gross stranger.

“Well, I’m looking for my granddaughter, she’s about your age, and lives around here so I thought you might know her.”

“Oh. What’s her name?” I said, thinking to myself about all the other girls in our neighborhood. I couldn’t think of one whose grandfather I didn’t know.

“Meagan,” he said, squinting his eyes as the sun lowered just enough to wash out his face.

“Well, I don’t know any Meagan,” I said. “Sorry, mister.”

With that, Dede announced, “I gotta go to the bathroom.” She hopped off the wall and began tugging at my foot from the driveway side of the fence. “Come on. Let’s go!” she demanded.

Just then the man said to me, “Here, I’ve got a picture of her. Let me show you.”

As I bent down to look through the window, I noticed he had a towel draped across the front of him. He removed the towel and uncovered himself with one hand, while grabbing my leg hanging on the alley side, with the other. I remember looking down in disgust at his dirty fingernails, his grimy, big, hand now digging into my chalky skin, his other hand moving quickly back and forth. I screamed, now pleading with Dede to pull harder on the leg she had hold of. The cement edges of the wall began to dig into either side of my upper thighs, stinging with the sweat and chalk I was covered in. I screamed again as I watched in terror he began to win the battle on the alley side. Dede lost her grip on my leg and I slid down a little farther toward the car. Dede caught hold of one of my hands and used it to leverage both her feet up on the wall so she could pull me harder. The right side of my face was now against the top edge of the wall and it was stinging with blood, too. When the man tried to get a better grip on me and pull me harder, my shoe came off into his hand and he lost his grip. Just then the neighbor boys from across the street started yelling and running toward the car. They were soaking wet, with a look of unfamiliar terror on their usually confident faces. The man looked up, pressed on the gas and sped off with my shoe and a

good chunk of the skin from my shin under his filthy jagged nails.

The boy's mother, Mrs. Tumey, was running not far behind them. "I called the police. Boys, get her down and inside the house now," she ordered, in the sort of tone my father used to call hysterical.

Dede and I were sobbing quietly as the boys picked us up and ran into the house with us. I'll never forget the look of *what now* on my mother's face, as the chlorine-soaked boys stood dripping on her usually pristine kitchen floor, holding us sweaty, chalky, panic-stricken girls.

"We were in the pool when we heard Grace start screaming. At first, we didn't think nothing of it. Then my mom looked out the kitchen window and started freakin'," John said. He was the oldest of the five Tumey boys. He looked at his mom, and then at his younger brother Chris, and didn't know what else to say.

By this time Dede and I were into one of those full-blown sobs, were you can hardly breathe.

"Oh Carol, it was awful. This creepy old man was in a car in the alleyway behind the house, and he was trying to pull Grace off the fence into his car. I already called the police. They are on their way," Mrs. Tumey said.

"There goes dinner," I heard my mother say under her breath, then louder, "Will you boys take the girls out back and hose them off while they calm down and I talk to your mother?" She shooed us all out the back door, Dede and I still clinging tightly to the boys.

"Carol," Mrs. Tumey said, "I don't think you understand..." I didn't catch the rest of what the moms were saying. John put me down near the little plastic pool in our back yard.

"You o.k., kiddo" he said sincerely, as I tried to catch my breath. I just shook my head silently.

Chris put Dede down next to me. We stared at each other in disbelief. We sat in the kiddie pool while the boys got the hose out and cleaned us up a bit. The cool water was a clean relief. Dede reached over and wiped some of the blood off my leg that was beginning to dry. It looked weird mixing with the chalk and the hose water.

“Does it sting,” she asked gently.

“Yup,” I said shrugging. My inner thighs and right cheek were already beginning to throb. “Did my mom look mad?” I asked.

Dede just rolled her eyes like, umm, isn’t she always.

Mrs. Tumey came out with some towels for us as the police arrived. My mother answered the door and I’m sure played the part of the concerned mother to a tee. Granted, she’d had a lot of practice.

Mrs. Tumey, in the meantime, took us to the bathtub, which was already full of warm bubbly water. She washed our hair gently, and scrubbed our backs softly with the face cloth.

“Girls, you do know you are not supposed to talk to strangers,” Mrs. Tumey said in a very low voice.

Dede immediately tattled, “I told her not to.”

“I was only trying to help the old man find his granddaughter,” I shot back defensively.

Someone was knocking on the door. “Mom, the police want to hear what you saw,” John said from the hallway.

“Be right out,” Mrs. Tumey said, dabbing my scraped up cheek with Bactine. “We don’t want to get an infection now, do we,” she said, as tears welled up in my eyes. “So, let’s just remember in the future, no talking to people we don’t know, especially if there are no grown-ups around. Even if the stranger pretends to need help. Ok girls?” she said. “And I’ve told you both to call me Barb. We’re friends aren’t we?” she

winked. She didn't even say it in a mean way, or like I was in trouble, just like an important reminder, because she cared about us.

This was only about the hundredth time I closed my eyes wished deeply that she was my mom. When Barb left the bathroom, Dede and I just sat quietly in the bath until the water turned cold and we were all pruney.

"Guess we better get out, huh?" Dede said, "I'll help you put some band aids on."

"Um yea, o.k." I said in a whisper.

Things felt really heavy between us. We had been in lots of trouble before, but this was different. Scary in a way I didn't even know scary could be.

We used practically every band-aid and all the gauze squares we could find, and then got dressed. We were lying on my bed, holding hands and staring at the ceiling in silence when the policeman walked into my room.

"Hello, girls. I'm Officer Tillman," he said super nicely. "I'd like to talk to you about what happened today."

"O.K." Dede and I said in unison, pushing our tired little bodies up into a sitting position.

"One at a time though," he said, and led Dede into the dining room, so he could talk to her alone.

I lay back down racking my brain, trying to remember what had happened. My memory seemed already blurry with fear and pain. Images kept racing through my mind, flashes of his grease-stained pants, the towel, his huge hands, and long, dirty fingernails. I shuddered, and began trembling. I must have drifted off to sleep, because the next thing I knew, Dede was shaking my arm, "Grace, get up. Grace, it's your turn. They are in the dining room waiting. Your dad's home now and my mom says the day has been just too stressful, so we're not staying for dinner." She gave me a big, long hug before I walked down the



hallway to the dining room thinking, *I really do ruin everything, don't I.*

When everybody left that night, I remember sitting in the corner of the dining room, near a huge palm plant my mother loved. She was on the phone the whole rest of the evening talking to everyone we knew, relaying the story of what had happened, and warning everyone that Officer Tillman had told her that there was a escaped child molester on the loose, and that he must be really desperate to try something like this, in a neighborhood like this, in broad daylight. So be extra careful to watch your kids.

My dad came and picked me up. "It's time for bed, sweet pea," he whispered in my ear. "You gave your mother and me quite a scare. Now get some sleep and we'll figure this all out in the morning," he said, tucking me into bed.

I lay there for a bit wondering if my mom was ever going to talk to me again, and how long the lecture, about consequences, was going be, after me ruining her dinner party and all. I went to bed, like so many other nights hating her.

Later that summer, when it was all over the news that the molester had finally been caught, I thought about my shoe, and wondered if they would make him give it back to me. I really missed that shoe.

By Michele Kilmer

## **How It Was**

We counted cans, we watched him drink.  
The sunlight fell behind the hill.  
The sour tide came in each night  
and slipped indoors and quenched the light.  
We drank until he'd had his fill.

By Kevin Smith

## Fallen

Eleven year old Sho Le rose from the bed as the dead rise from the grave: weightless. It had been decided, she would leave everything and everyone behind. She no longer questioned or allowed doubt to sway her; her life was waiting on the other side of fear. Silently, Sho Le slipped barefoot through the servant's entrance toward the kitchen, under the cover of night. The cold, slate floor should have sent a chill up her spine, but she felt nothing, cursing her master for denying her shoes just the same. The courtyard's back entry from the kitchen wasn't watched; she would find her escape there.

Cautiously, Sho Le stepped outside, her hooded cloak glided about her demure frame and the stubble of her shaved head, concealing her in the shadows where the walkways and darkness of night swallowed her up.

Once free from the inner living quarters of the sanctuary, the complexity of the narrow passageways required a keen eye and a recollection of the previous errands she had performed for her mistress that led her to the eastern gate of the fortress. She would hide there and wait for the steel gate to open up to the wretched, defeated city once named Beijing, where the broken hearts and lives of its inhabitants cursed its new existence, along with the ancients who shared their fate.

Sho Le had but a few hours before the night watch would find her empty mat. Running wasn't among her choices; placing distance between herself and the soldiers couldn't be done. Open camouflage was her only option. Three years of service for The Supreme Governor Lang taught her the benefits of acquiring such a skill. She could disappear in plain sight.

Sho Le missed her hair.

She missed a lot of things.

Most of all, she missed her brother. She wondered if her mother had sold him, too. Many children in the province had

been sold during the Sun of Red Famine, suitably named after General Lang's hordes burned every crop in their menacing path, turning the setting sun and rising moon a burnt red. Sho Le knew her mother had little choice, had wished her daughter to survive, but now she had to know if both were still in the city, if they had survived or died trying.

Sho Le's hate for her master was considerably worse than the pain of dishonoring her mother's contract. Her master had kept her alive on rice water and humiliation. Sho Le dreamt of her mother's jubilation at their reunion and the day when she could run into her open arms, knowing she was safe from such horrific treatment. The dream conjured the scent of her mother's hair as she held her close. The thought filled her with hope--- the kind of hope that keeps you believing, even against all odds.

The clear night sky, with a half moon shining, mocked her futile attempt to quickly cover her stripped, naked body in the putrid, slimy mud in which she stood. Her empty stomach lurched repeatedly in obstinate revolt at her grotesque hiding place. Staggering, Sho Le fell face down in the palace's garbage heap, struggling with piled garbage about her. She knew the guards would never search for her there, for among the refuse were also the dead fellow servants who hadn't been strong enough to endure the ever quick lash and rice water rations.

The distant clatter of horse's hooves on paved streets bounced off the tall fortress walls. Sho Le froze, sealing a death pose in wait for her rescuer, the garbage collector. She wasn't certain of when or how her escape would play out, but she knew she would die trying.

The heap was truly unbearable. Sho Le drifted in and out of awareness as the soldiers deposited another body. Her frightened mind stuck as if in a bad dream, and viewed this new body like her own. Had she really died or was she imagining things? Maybe her pressing desires to find her family kept her soul fixed, bound to earth in determination

without her knowing. No, she was stronger than that. She had survived. She would feel her mother's embrace before her life was over.

The guards left with no whistle blowing or commanded searches. Later, time held no permanency, Sho Le was aware of the small roar of a diesel engine. Her rescuer had arrived. Freedom was on the other side of the towering, heavily guarded, automatic gate, now opening for the large backhoe to enter.

The growl, spit, and sputter of the backhoe sounded as if hell was coming for her. The ground vibrated as the bucket hit the pavement, scraping it free of filth. Sho Le deeply gulped unfulfilling breaths. She, the garbage, and corpses began rolling; the bodies flopped about without restraint. Her mother's face was brutally torn from her mind. The pain of every lash and slap revisited her. She was screaming, no longer capable of keeping terror in check.

Abruptly, she watched the pavement rise up to meet her. She heard an arm crack. Instinctively, Sho Le grabbed hers. It wasn't long before the collector made another run at the excess he had dropped. However, the bucket slowed to a stop inches from her. Sho Le needed to run, but she couldn't move. Paralyzed in fear, her surroundings no longer made any sense to her.

Cautiously, the collector peered around the bucket. He wore a protective mask covering his mouth and nose along with a scarf that was wrapped around his head and neck. His eyes were the only things left uncovered.

He stared at the apparition on the ground. Sho Le watched him intently, with dread creeping into her resolve. The man gazed at the stars for a moment, and then walked towards her. His approach reminded her of an animal stalking its prey. Five feet out, he motioned with his hand for her to stay put. Sho Le wasn't going anywhere, at least not where she wanted to go.

The driver walked back to his cab and grabbed the sack he had carried to scavenge with. One of the guards shouted, "What's wrong," over the loud engine. He offered a hand signal that the engine was acting strange. This seemed to appease the guard and he went back to his post. The man stuffed the sack inside his coveralls and proceeded to earnestly look over the noisy engine. He then casually walked back around the bucket.

Sho Le's terrified mind was reeling. Was he going to turn her in?

The collector knelt beside her, keeping his distance as he visually examined the body and then looked at her inquisitively.

"Don't be afraid," he mumbled to himself over the growl of the engine. "What do you want?" he asked her, his voice sounding confused and his posture expressing caution.

Sho Le shook her head in response, not sure if she could trust him. The man quickly pulled the sack from his garment.

"I'll put the body inside and take you out when we're far from the palace. Would that help?"

Still in shock, Sho Le nodded, not sure why he wanted the body, but incredibly, her plan could still work. Do Mea jumped into his cab, proud that his ancestors trusted him, and drove past the guards with the bucket high in the air like he did once a week. But tonight he was assisting her ancestors with their mission.

By morning, Do Mea had taken the bagged body to his makeshift home and laid the uncovered, emaciated body reverently on a mat behind a partition. He ordered his startled children to sit in a circle around their cooking fire on the clay floor. Transfixed, they listened as their father told the unbelievable story of how this dead servant girl had sprung from his bucket and fell to the ground, her soul coming back to perform a task.

Do Mea faithfully believed that Sho Le had been sent back by her ancestors and he wanted his children to believe it, too. Little wonder. Civil upheaval had turned China inside out. Many people prayed to their ancestors for help. Their new ruler's thirst for conquest had gobbled up Russia and Europe, calling their new country, The United Order. It seemed to Do Mea that his countrymen had gone insane. They all needed the guidance their ancestors could provide. The world watched fearfully, knowing these men's desire for one world order. A nuclear holocaust was imminent if tensions between all nations and The U.O. weren't repaired.

With wide eyes and astonished faces, Do Mea's children stared at the partition behind which Sho Le's lifeless body lay. Sho Le laughed quietly to herself, picturing the scene Do Mea had described, but wondered why he had told his children such a tale. She hadn't seen any spirit wondering around. What did they know that she didn't? Curious, Sho Le decided to take a look. When she saw the body, it frightened her, but its presence also beckoned her to come nearer. Sho Le slowly stepped closer, and then knelt beside it, subconsciously drawn to it. Like ripples in a pond disturbed by a detached leaf, it occurred to her that this was her. She had died.

Suddenly, and without warning, a flash of brilliant, white light filled every corner of the cramped shelter, striking with awe and finality. Do Mea reached for his children. Sho Le saw her mother and brother's face in the light coming toward her. They looked so clean, so happy. They beckoned her to come to them. An overwhelming sense of joy saturated her being. Desperation disappeared. She felt whole. She felt fed and alive. They were together again --- like in the beginning, for always. They embraced as the ground was swept of debris and purpose.

By Renae Lopez

## The Girl of the Romanian Manor

Pillows are gripped by cold clammy arms.  
The memory incites pain along infected wounds.  
Like a semi truck overturning on a cold icy road,  
And with the sound of a thousand dying birds,  
The picture seeks solace, for somebody to know.

She, too, was somebody's daughter,  
But her unremitting sorrow shows how much she needs a  
mother.  
Someone to provide her with what a sickly child needs most:  
A proper bedtime free of struggles and nightmares.

The picture doesn't leave the mind,  
Even after restless sleep one manages to find.  
Silently borne is the struggle for recourse,  
Ended by a call to that place longing to be Maternal.

I want to lay you down to rest,  
With a hint of lavender and a gentle motion.  
All I want is to see you to slumber,  
And to lay a garnish of Chamomile upon your proper bed.  
To tuck your weary bones in with a kiss,  
Giving you the closure and comfort you didn't find in life,  
And to be the one to tell you "Goodnight".

By Jacob Button



***-Hello (you may be my baby)-***

*Emerging breathing breathless from the void  
When nothing in this life seems true  
To see you standing there just like you do  
Blazing up the room  
And I wonder, if maybe we're on the threshold of a feeling  
If we could keep believing  
Could we be comets meeting mid-December  
Longest nights in darkness all alone  
reaching fingertips  
across a galaxy for that maybe spark of a touch  
Hope we'd almost given up  
Here where we stand upon the brink  
No bridge below our feet  
Could we leave this crossing just unscathed  
Or burn our former skins away  
Could this be the singularity*

*One moment  
We'd risk it all to keep?  
And maybe find how both our dreams, they share a common  
weave  
Are as easy to connect as raindrops in the hand  
I don't want to fear that frayed edge of possibility*

*-Good morning, baby-  
To feel every particle of me is  
Waking up surrounded in your arms  
The screaming stops  
Let me know you're not a dream  
That it's all happening right now  
That we can make it through  
And the battles will be won*

*(Will we be enough?)  
How impossible is this  
In a world of broken trust and promises  
Where cynics walk like wise men wearing robes of ice  
Your arms are home; will always be  
angels  
falling, unafraid to show their scars,  
comets  
rising, reaching up for grace  
Together, at the new beginning  
Imperfect but complete*

*-Goodnight, sweet baby-  
Sleep now and breathe  
Spring breezes on my cheek  
Solace*

*Approaching apotheosis in those few quiet stolen moments  
So much stronger in one another  
Than alone where we first begun  
Treading on the rim while all around Pandora's tears rain down  
Found forgiveness for our wrongs  
Fly Free from every one  
On borrowed wings we sail  
through the shards  
There's nothing left to fear, not even the dark*

*-Goodbye, my only baby-*

*My last wish for you is live free of all regret  
And I hope you will be whole again  
May forever find you clothed in evergold  
But don't you let your hands grow cold  
Your hands that caught me every time  
But please now let me go and do not cry  
Can't bear to see the canyons carved your face*

*Your sweet song is eulogy enough  
To send me away with the glory of a nova  
For our time – it was worth the short life  
Please let's have no apologies  
If I knew a love this real could only last a day  
I'd live all my mistakes the same  
So find me in this last embrace  
If letting go's the price to pay, I choose the pain  
See the cynics as they fall away  
As "impossible" is dropping from their lips  
For we've become the phoenixes  
eclipse them with our shadows  
and shine with all our light  
I leave this life more whole than I begun  
No matter the dark that may be there  
I'd find you anywhere  
Until we come crashing once again  
May roses in the cosmos  
And roses for your hair  
Grow forever unimpaired  
Until the universe is only dust  
and starstuff*

*By Sandra Videmsky*

## **B505-108**

On Mount Helicon I stumbled  
Upon the Muses  
Washing their tender bodies in  
A spring and crowning their heads  
With myrtle boughs  
In my infatuation I did not shield  
Mine eyes from such holy brilliance  
That mortal man may not yet know;  
They rose up in anger against me  
- Nine against one -  
And my knees shook at their awful fury.  
Melpomene, by far the most grandiose of all,  
Cursed me thus, "Thou that hast seen divine bodices  
May'st thou never requiteth thine love for  
A fair maiden,  
And be forever doomed to sing of  
Cold Nights."

By Michelangelo Maccharella

## An echo from the shore

All she wants is me to give her my love  
and she will give me the Moon.  
How could she not become the radiant goddess.

Aphrodite.

The ocean and tides.

How could any woman not bloom, in love light  
like a cactus flower, under the desert moon  
its beauty born the moment beheld  
by an undivided soul.

Yet I don't know how to let go.

I find myself clinging fiercely to the rocks, indignant  
And the waves are lapping at my shore...

*let me carry you my love*

*and I will rise and fall with you,*

*like the pulsing of your soul,*

*like the rhythms of your heart*

*the sun and the moon*

*come with me my love*

*be free.*

I hold tighter! Terrified of (my) life  
love's dazzling light.

*let go...* a whisper of the night

*be free...* an echo from the shore

*I love you...* the sirens in the mist...

become fainter

as the years go sailing by.

by Nik Spitz

## Lake Tail

The lithe, nearly silent boat cut neatly across Lake Como. A dark haired man in a short sleeved white shirt stood at the wheel. His muscular arms, steering steady, drove the boat as fast as it would go. He had chosen the darkest night of the year for his deed and so far everything had gone as planned. He was a good employee and never would have dreamed of touching what was in the bag; he was a professional after all. All he wanted was the check made out to him, in the fine handwriting of his boss, at the end of the month. His wife would have a new dress and his precious Nina a new doll; he imagined her big brown eyes sparkling with excitement. All they knew tonight was that daddy was at work. A cloth sack rested in the berth; it was heavy with ruby rings, strands of pearls, sapphire bracelets, and even a delicate diamond tiara that had once belonged to a de Medici lady. He had miscalculated and didn't see the wet, black tips of the jagged rocks towards the North shore of the lake. His heart pounded as felt the shocking, jagged rip of metal, and in one still, airborne moment of disbelief, captain and cargo were flung into the black waters.

Her muscular, coral colored tail was half coiled, resting on the rocks of her small boudoir. She looked in the mirror, her green hair spread out, floating around her. Her brown eyes widened to look for any changes in her face. It was her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, and she wanted something to change. She liked to pretend she was a grand sea mermaid. Being a petite lake mermaid was not a high mer-status, and she was not from the best family in the lake. No one in her family seemed to care about her birthday. They seemed to want her out of their grotto and onto her own – tonight. She was ready to go. Mermaids were known to be competitive scavengers. It was the scavenging, the covetousness, and the deceitful nature of mermaids that she was tired of. Whoever had the most glass bottles or the biggest grotto was considered in the upper echelon. She had been schooled by her grandmother in the old

ways of fast swimming, high pitched singing, and tracking moon changes. She knew she was different. She pulled herself up on the wet rocks near the shore and saw something glittering. As she held the small diamond crown in her hands, she looked at it in disbelief: she knew that there was nothing finer in the lake and this would make her the new queen.

“Come on Gigi, come swimming with me.” The young man and woman held hands as they walked along the shore. The strings of lights from the party glowed in the distance. The cool waters of the lake lapped at their tanned ankles. The young man stopped to face her, holding both of her hands in his, “Why are you leaving me to go to the University, Gigi?” His smile bright, even in the dark, “Why? When we could have a beautiful life here, no?” He leaned in to touch his lips to hers. His hands strayed to her shoulders, pulling at the straps of her dress, the plainness of which was set off by her dark, lush hair and sparkling eyes. She pushed him back, “Let’s go swimming!” She let go of his hands and ran into the shore, pulling the dress over her head as she went. They set out across the lake with sleek athletic strokes. Once the lights on the shore grew small, they bobbed in the black water, paddling, laughing, splashing. He dove under the water, planning to pop up behind her. When he emerged from the water he met a pair of plump lips. He closed his eyes and touched her hair, but instead of the black spun silk of his Gigi’s hair, he felt something like wet algae. He opened his eyes and saw a very pale girl wearing a tiny crown and blinking her eyes. He turned to see that Gigi was halfway across the lake, back towards the shore. He heard a splash behind him and the strange girl was gone.

The old man sat in his aged villa by the Lake. He sipped wine from a goblet that had been his fathers’ and his grandfathers’ before him. He walked out to the balcony overlooking the lake. There was not much to see, as this was the darkest night of the year, but he listened to the small waves lapping the shore. He was nestled in the east wing of the place; the rest of the house was a forgotten no-mans’ land of

moldering books, broken furniture, and cobwebs. Tonight he had been informed by his loyal houseman Tonio that an old door had been torn away from the tunnel that housed the Vault, and that valuable treasures had been stolen. Strangely, the man felt nothing. He had been alone here for many years now. His greatest treasure had already been lost many years back. So independent, he chuckled, and shook his head at the memory of his wife. She had insisted on swimming in the lake every morning and sometimes at night. He remembered the sight of her tall, athletic figure and her bright, fearless smile. One night she never came back. Now he sat alone, wishing that he had someone to care for. Sometimes he heard sounds in the lake: splashing, shrill laughter that sounded playful, not frightening. One of these days he would have to come down from his balcony and take a look.

A woman and a little girl are on the sunny shore of the lake. It is a Holiday. The woman wears all black and a net veil covers her eyes. She sits in a chair, reading. The little girl runs the length of the shore and back again like a little wind up machine. Her robust body is brown from a summer of such days. Her mother looks up, sees her daughter, and calls out. "Nina, it's almost time to go home." Her daughter is running toward her at full speed. "Mama, look what I found!" The little girl holds up a ruby ring, the sunlight catching on all of its facets, "Mama can I keep it?" "Oh my darling, that is exquisite," says the mother catching her breath. "We will put it in the safe until your 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. That is what your daddy would have done."

By Michelle Prejean



## Ticks and Tocks and Seashells

Time is the sea – tumbling blue and gray ahead of me –  
I dangle a tentative toe in the froth of its edge –  
the water appears to go on forever, but of course,  
I know that it does not.

It comes to an end.

Do we get to choose the sort of end we want?  
A quiet and wet tumbling over the edge of the world  
into cloaking and numbing darkness?

Or are we carried by a great, unforgiving tsunami,  
full of the varied shrapnel of our lifetimes,  
bruises and blood, kisses and hugs, love and loss –  
slammed against the detritus  
of some desolate unfamiliar shore?

I am no longer standing at the sandy beach of the beginning.

I have survived the swells and storms, the dead calms  
and the occasional sucking vortex of shock.

Am I closer to the place where there be dragons?

Will my modest dinghy simply glide in countless little figure  
eights at the edge

because my tough genetic history dooms me until I am a  
doddering 95 or so?

Do we grow too old to dream? I am still full of dreams and  
many times

feel quite silly for it. Do I have a right to want it all?

Until I began to *feel* old, I was optimistic and *reasonably* happy.

I know happiness is not a forever state:  
it's like rare pearls we stumble onto once in a while,  
and we string them carefully together  
to remember how happy felt.

By Annette Lee

## The Wedding

She came in,  
Veiled and resplendent,  
Cheeks flushed,  
Back lit by thin July sun,  
Her white gown rustling on ancient tiles.

She listened.  
Voices uplifted in pageantry,  
Echoing sounds of tradition,  
The resonance puncturing the silence  
Of the venerable cathedral.

She walked  
The longest walk,  
Her gait steadied by her father's arm,  
Her quickening heart soothed  
By her mother's loving watch.

She journeyed  
Over the bridge from daughter  
To wife and lover  
By words and a kiss.

She left  
With him, unveiled.  
Their ancestry joined:  
A new lineage sealed  
With the aggregate promises of love.  
Alleluia.

By Cheri A. McCarty

## The Genealogy of Adam

Behold the single atom  
That waxed bright in secret  
Amid the darkness of the chasm,  
Then multiplied and helixed  
Into the flesh of father Adam.  
Alight the candelabra  
And behold the very first  
Transgressor of holy law  
Whom begot every thirst:  
See how the atom scaled the ladder  
That starts with the rung of spirit  
Then progresses up to matter.  
When dust evolved to flesh, it  
Begot the sin of rapture;  
Thus the atom descended the pit  
And was returned to ash and amber...

Behold the tooth of the serpent,  
And its venom invading your heel  
When you walk in the internment  
Of the prince of the air, Israel.  
Let your soul magnify the Lord  
And behold the vigil of the seraph  
As he wields the flaming sword:  
The fruit of knowledge imputes a tariff.  
If your brother's eye is splintered  
Remove it so that he may see  
Forty-eight graves in the Green River;  
All were dug by Cain's progeny...  
Nothing is hidden that is not revealed;  
Behold the blood of six young lambs  
Sprinkled throughout the fields  
By the prodigal son of Sam.  
Behold rumors of war being relayed

Between principalities and powers.  
Behold a bird on one September day  
Annihilating the Babel Towers...  
The lamp of the body is the eyes;  
If filled with the concupiscence of lust,  
They will fail to see this iron bird rise  
On metal wings, immolate, and combust...  
My peace I give you, I give you peace;  
If your hand is armed, disarm it  
And behold the number of the Beast  
Branded upon the Great Harlot.

This Beast, which walks in the flesh,  
Is numbered six-hundred sixty six...  
Behold St. Peter sifted and threshed  
On an inverted crucifix.  
Behold the leper's palsied fist  
As it deals heavy, heavy blows  
Against St. Francis' merciful kiss...  
He is like Christ given to the gallows.  
Behold, as we are Adam's next of kin,  
How this lineage imputes divinity  
To the wicked and the workers of sin  
While the virgin is imputed ignominy.  
Behold the ravenous wolves guised  
In sheep's clothes as they shout credos;  
These who come claiming to be Christ  
Above all else are Anticristos.  
Adam's blood soaks the soil  
And the soil secretes blood in return  
Upon this dirt us dust must toil  
Until the bush fiercely burns....

Behold... the first Adam's genealogy.  
Now behold the Second Adam,  
In whom there is neither slave nor free,

Nor male nor female, nor Gentile nor Jew  
For the Tree of Life was raised at Calvary,  
    And it has made all things anew...  
    Behold, how the second Adam's side  
    Was pierced, and how from it burst  
The blood and water that formed His bride:  
    The second Eve, the Apostolic church...  
    Second Adam, may You be praised  
    By circumcised and uncircumcised  
For the old things have passed away  
    And this is the genealogy of Christ.

By Art Lupisan

## The Bullfrog Awaits

A college Biology department can go through a couple thousand frogs in a year, so idea of breeding our own in-house made sense. Since we needed adult frogs, the use of growth hormone seemed like a good idea. Now that I've spent the last fourteen hours trapped in a store room of the fifth-floor biology lab with a buffalo-sized North American Bullfrog waiting patiently for my exit, I see the possible error of my ways.

We knew that they grew fast. It took them two weeks from tadpole to adult. The department heads loved this because the college could sell the extra frogs for hard-to-come-by cash. I'm not exactly sure where the mistake happened, but not only did they grow fast, they also began to grow larger. They grew large fast. The one outside the door had been the size of a cat about nine hours ago. I don't know the details or the science behind it all, and the guy who did is currently being digested by the giant Budweiser advertisement out in the lab.

So now it's just me and the frog. I've peeked out of the door: the frog's black eyes watched me dispassionately each time, and I think it knows it has won. I wonder what it's like to be frog shit. Well I can't stay in here forever. I noticed a mop in the corner and I've hatched a plan. It's a stupid plan, but it's all I have. I figure that the frog will grab the closest thing with its tongue, and the mop should keep it busy long enough to make it across the lab to reach the door. I count to three then throw open the door. I charge out with the mop in front of me like a sword. The frog's eyes twinkled just as its tongue launched from its mouth and yanked the mop from my hands. I haul ass. I make the door and as I pull it shut, I see the frog prying the mop from its mouth with its fat green frog hand.

I'm safe outside of the lab. The frog is on the other side of the door, but that's someone else's problem. I catch my breath then walk down to the drinking fountain for a much needed

drink. The water is cool; the best water I've ever tasted. I stand up and run my fingers through my hair as my mind plans my next move. Who do I call first? Will I go to jail? I must have broken some kind of law. I...The frog in the lab is now croaking. *Ruuurp, ruuurp, ruuurp*. Whatever, Satchmo, sing all you want. Just as I'm about to laugh the frog in the lab- it gets an answer from somewhere downstairs. *Ruuurp*. Oh shit. Oh shit! We fed that stuff to a couple hundred frogs today! Oh shit!

I can't go downstairs-- we kept them in the basement! They must have broken out. So I start to go up the stairs. As I climb, I listen to the frog in the lab croak to the frog downstairs. This sounds like conversation. I reach the door to the roof and walk outside into the night air. From below one of the frogs croaks, but this time it is answered from somewhere outside of the building. *Ruuurp*. This is answered by three other frogs that have also escaped from the building. I stand in the dark on this rooftop; now I can hear hundreds of loud croaking, giant Bullfrogs in what must be a chatter of celebration. Then I realize that I am listening to their *mating calls!* From the direction of their calls I know that they've reached the Mississippi. I don't know what to do now. Worse still...I don't know how big they'll get.

By Marc Ferris

## Cootie Catchers

The clouds were mashed fruit against the sky as we stood in front of the café, you know, the one underneath the movie theater downtown, where the three of us were supposed to have coffee, where I was supposed to meet this girl my then-boyfriend wouldn't stop talking about, meet her and, I don't know, become her soul sister or something.

But I hated her. I hated her on sight. I hated the way she dyed her hair red and chopped it off to look so successfully that kind of pretty that walks the line between Courtney Love and Orphan Annie. I hated how she probably weighed about ninety pounds, how her hip bones protruded above the low hem of her shirt like the wings of a bird in flight, and her ass. How he kept looking at it.

*And she was pretentious.*

"My sister cut her wrists again last night," she said, and popped her gum, "left blood all over the floor and my mother just cried, didn't do anything about it."

And I recoiled a little, thinking, *God, who says that to someone they just met?*

"And my father's never there," she went on, with the hard tears of a girl that has to fend for herself, well rehearsed and right on cue. And that bastard, my "boyfriend", actually moved to hold her, but she flinched away.

It was a good performance: good posture, nice hopeless air, good skin, a pretty frown, but something was missing. Maybe it was conviction

Maybe it was class.

But now, it seemed, she was really crying. So instead of saying anything, I did the decent thing and I took her by the arm and led her toward the public restroom across the street.



Once inside, away from him, she looked completely different, like an actress off the set. She was a child crying openly now, with an unfortunate haircut and clothes too thin to protect her from any real kind of weather. I took some toilet paper from one of the stalls and handed it to her. She sniffed loudly, trumpeting into the makeshift Kleenex, her make up running down.

My anger vanished at the sight of her; I no longer knew what to say. I pulled a piece of paper out of my pocket and said, "Do you know how to make a cootie catcher?"

She looked at me as though I were very strange.

"No," she managed, "Don't you mean a fortune teller?"

"Similar but different," I said, moving towards the counters on the edge of the sinks, my shoes tapping lightly on the tiles. I unfolded the paper I kept in my pocket to its full 8 ½ X 11 inches. I lay it flat on the counter and began to fold, saying to her, "Tell me when to stop."

She waited for a minute, watching me, interested, and then said, "Stop."

I pinched the center of the intricately folded piece of paper, pulling it up until it was a small paper house with a paper chimney and a paper curl of smoke.

"Wow!" she said, smiling, and joined me at the counter. "How did you do that?"

I pulled a paper carpet over the paper stairs and read what was written, "Count to four."

"One," she said, and I collapsed the house, shoving the carpet where the chimney used to be, the paper expanding fold by fold beneath my fingers.

"Two," and the paper became massed and lumpy.

"Three," and I folded it legs, structured it to stand.

“Four,” she said, and I pulled the paper head out from under the paper stomach and the paper hedgehog I’d folded stood on the counter, looking up at her, grinning.

We looked at one another, giddy, and I brushed back the paper quills in the middle of its back to expose the words, scrawled in pencil, “Pick a color”.

“Blue,” she whispered, with marveling eyes.

“B.” I said, parting the hedgehog down its back, its legs folding inwards, quills flapping and fluttering.

“L.” The paper innards of the paper hedgehog flattened and disappeared under my palms, and a feathered pine sprung up.

“U.” The paper rippled and parts of it rose, no longer a distinct shape as I worked it like dough.

“E.” I said, and crimping and pinching the final bits, and stood back.

In front of us, on the counter, stood a paper scene: a paper yard with a paper pine tree, a large paper trampoline and a small paper house. There was a little sign in the front corner of it that labeled the structure “St. Cloud, ‘97”. She was too shocked to speak. I opened the little paper door, the size of a thumbnail, to the little paper house and said, “You can go in if you want.”

“What? How?”

“Just try,” I said.

She put her hand near the little door and the room filled with the rustling of paper as the door expanded to meet her and she gasped and yanked away.

“Go on,” I said. “It won’t hurt you.”

She moved her hand toward it again and this time the paper door expanded more slowly. She waited until she was in

the house up to her shoulder and then she smiled at me, with a childish happiness, "I can't feel any walls!"

We both poked our heads in into the dark paper house, which had now expanded to take up a quarter of the public bathroom. Somehow still perched on the counter, the structure was the size of a golf cart. I felt around for the light switch inside the paper doorway and found it, turned it on to expose a single room of pink shag carpeting, a wooden dresser, a large mirror, and a bed in one corner, covered with a handmade blue and green patchwork quilt. The sunlight light was coming in through the thin yellow curtains which hung over a window on the far wall. It looked more roomy on the inside. It must have been at least twenty paces to that far window.

"It's just how I remember it," she said. "Nothing's changed."

"Go in," I offered.

She looked at me with wonder and fear and temptation.

"Go on."

She looked at the room.

"What'll happen if I close the door?" She asked quietly.

"When you open it back up from the inside, you'll see the lawn like it's a lawn. The sky will be how you remember it, even the cat you played with back then will be there; he's up in the tree right now, but you can't see him because he's too small at the moment. But he's there and if you go inside and open the door from within you'll see him."

"But how do I get out again?" She asked, a little trepidation in still in her voice.

"Hey," I smiled sweetly, almost warmly, and put my hand on her shoulder, "I'll be right here. No matter how long you stay in there, I'll be carrying this paper with me. All you have to do is knock from the inside and I'll open the door and let you out."

She trembled slightly under my palm, took a sweeping glance of the room again.

“If you don’t want it,” I said, pulling her closer and rubbing her arm, “I’ll just unfold it. You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to do. I’m not here to try to scare you; I just wanna help. I thought a cootie catcher might cheer you up because this is what a cootie catcher does: it takes all the bad shit away. That’s what the cooties are: whatever messes you up.”

She stood very still in my half-embrace, looking glassy-eyed and vacantly into her past.

“Just say the word,” I said very softly, “and I’ll unmake it.”

“No,” she whispered.

“No’: don’t unmake it?” I look at her, “Or ‘No’ –”

“Don’t unmake it.”

“Okay.” I said, stepping away from her, letting my arm drop, and asked, “Would you like a boost?”

She nodded, and I bent to the cool aqua tiles of the floor and collected her foot in my hands. She grabbed my shoulder with one hand and the shag carpet with the other and I lifted her into the room. She stood and walked over to the window, growing smaller as she walked further into the room, and the whole structure was shrinking, pulling itself in, smaller and smaller and the last I saw of her, she’d made it to the window and started to push the curtain aside, the light shining on her in golden waves but my vantage was shrinking as the door pulled itself smaller and smaller and I called to her “Don’t forget to knock!” And then she was too small to see.

I closed the little door and unfolded the structure completely and put the paper back in my pocket.

He was still waiting outside, leaning against the glass window of the photography shop next door to the public restroom. When he looked at me he smiled and his face came

together with such radiance that it broke my heart where I stood, until he said, "Where's Melissa?"

"Oh," I said, waiting a beat, "I think she had to go home."

"Really? That's too bad."

"Yeah, it is," I lied, "but *we* could still go to coffee, right? I mean, you still have time and everything, don't you?"

"Yeah, of course. It's just too bad," he said. "I wanted you to meet her. I thought you guys would make good friends."

By Sarah Goodman

## Heaven in a Disposable Cup

Anytime before five o'clock in the morning is an ungodly hour to be up. My brain is cursing me, and my muscles are screaming mutiny. But hope in this desperate hour comes clad in green Starbucks aprons. I stagger my way across to the bright aura of ambient light surrounding the coffee bar, along with all the other travelers lugging heavy carry-ons.

The hardy girls are bustling about and keeping the drinks pouring despite the hour that has the rest of us stumbling around like newborn bats. This seems to be the only venue in whole airport that's open. Not even Hudson News is willing to deal.

I tell one barista to put as much caffeine in mine as she can spare. Slide my one-fifty change into the wallet. The next zombie elbows past me, desperate as I for the reviving powers promised us within those cups.

The precious in hand, I pop up the lid to dive right in and I almost miss it. My eyes fly open and I lean back away from the cup. There, a lost little spiral-arm galaxy is floating instead of whipped cream, dipping its milky fingers playfully in and out my drink, finding star-crossed love with the cocoa and coffee beans. It's perfectly at home in its unusual abode.

It must be the hour.

It must be the Ambien.

I try to shoo it away, but it only spins more rapidly, throwing droplets around and dotting my crisp white shirt with a brown constellation. I hiss for it to stop that, but I swear it's chuckling at me like a child who is enjoying being naughty. Okay, so what would any sane person do? I hastily cap my coffee and trap the little rascal inside and back away from the table.

A quick check reveals no one has noticed, no one is staring at me. The rest of the people in the shop are gazing blankly into the depths of their own boring cups like they are ice-fishing for wisdom in them, but not seeing the coffee at all. I flee the scene.

I stare at my face in the mirror after washing up in the bathroom, the dark circles under my eyes and the crow's feet, the lines all around my mouth. I stare for a long time. I can dig my fingertips in and stretch the skin out a thousand miles each way. I don't recognize my own skin anymore – it's like a garment a few sizes too big. This isn't my real face. At least, it shouldn't be. That new miracle anti-aging cream does not work the miracles it promised. That's another hundred dollars down the drain, and still the same phantom in the mirror greets me every morning. I've been fighting with this ghost of me for so long, I forgot what I'm hoping to win. I do not remember what I want back anymore, that I lost so many years ago.

The phantom looks at me, and I look at her.

I return to my cup with an apology. None of the other zombies have noticed it as a free opportunity for more caffeine. It's still waiting, sitting there demurely, showing no signs of life from the outside at all. I almost begin to fear I've missed my chance. But no, when I lift the lid, it's still there just skimming along in the perfect joy of caffeine and sticky sweetness. Its spiral arms are shimmering with billions miniature stars. I give it a nudge and ask it to share what flavor has brought it so far out here.

When I drink it is heaven. A whole universe in a disposable cup.

I leave the barista my last twenty.

By Sandra Videmsky

## wry and dry

my life, winding down, reads not like  
an album full of pictures of wonder  
but rather like a tinder-dry technical manual:  
not the stuff that dreams  
are made of, is it?  
too plain, too prosaic,  
too utilitarian  
to be considered high drama  
or great romance.  
i had the soul of a poet  
but the destiny  
of a geek – swathed in cryptic  
acronyms and emoticons.

By Annette Lee



## Meaning of Life?

Are you feeling depressed and worthless? Have your lofty goals eluded you? Do you feel as though your life has no meaning? If the answer is yes then let us help you to find purpose for your existence. Join us in making history. Our mission is two-fold: to make Bixby bridge the most popular place in the world to make the leap into eternity, and to break the world record for the highest number of suicides in one year.

Why jump from an ugly building onto a dirty sidewalk? Now you can take the final step from the most beautiful bridge in the world, onto a gorgeous, pristine beach. We will be happy to provide free transportation to the bridge as well. When you jump, you will be contributing to a record-setting endeavor, and, you can rest assured that your life has acquired the importance that has been missing.

Time is short though. The end of the year is approaching, and the clock is ticking. Contact us immediately to make a date with destiny. Ask about our special New Years Eve "Dance with Death," and group jump. Make the leap into the record books because...

"Your Life Should Have Meaning Too."™

By Jack Dodson

## **the poetess**

As I begin to read your poems

their power enters my body.

Your faithful, deep feeling words

slip through my unsuspecting skin.

I feel them enter my bruisey heart

as air enters my lungs.

There is an affinity.

I dive into the pool.

It takes me a dreamworld moment to orient my self there.

Underwater, time and the senses seem to unfold...

I emerge splashing, back into the surface world.

Breathe.

And I understand your first lesson:

though I want to expand my vision and aspire

to carry myself and you

to the farthest horizons.

I miss the point.

I read your poems. I listen.

I feel your pain.

aloneness.

And I know that they are my own  
and I understand that your voice speaks  
not only to me,  
but to anyone  
who cares  
to listen.

So I begin to write in the first person  
to listen to the voices in my heart  
and know that this  
is where transformation  
begins.

By Nik Spitz

# **The Creative Writing Club of MPC**

## **2011-2012 Officers**

**Sarah Goodman – President**

**Javier Estrada – Vice President**

**Michelle Prejean – Treasurer**

## **Faculty Advisor**

Henry Marchand

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## Advisor's Note

This is a student publication and as such depends for its existence on the tireless (well, sometimes very tired but nonetheless persistent) efforts of its Managing Editor and other members of the magazine staff, all MPC students. Their time is volunteered and the magazine they produce is distributed free of charge; printing and other costs associated with the magazine, however, do in fact require funding.

Please consider a contribution to the magazine. We can offer no tax breaks or other inducements or rewards, beyond our sincere thanks and the satisfaction that comes with supporting the literary arts. It is my pleasure and privilege to bear witness to the extraordinary creativity and dedication to the written word demonstrated by this magazine's staff and the writers of MPC; if you too value their work, please contact me at **hmarchand@mpc.edu** or at the postal address below.

Thanks for reading.

Henry Marchand

Instructor  
English Department  
Humanities Division  
Monterey Peninsula College  
980 Fremont Street  
Monterey, CA 93940

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