



Daughters of Zeus

Tempt me into your creation,
embrace my coarse words in song.
Though sirens fall at your feet,

fill my ears with inspiration,
teach my pen right from wrong.
Turn me into your creation,

let my thoughts dance in your constellations,
mold my fingertips until they belong—
Still unworthy to fall at your feet,

avert my eyes from all temptation,
make the sun brief and stars long.
Open your eyes and show me creation,

feed my soul with inspiration
but let me learn when I'm wrong.
Tempt me into your creation,

where even sirens fall at your feet.

★ *Amelia Dobo*

images 2005
volume nineteen



Staff

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Ellie Durham

LITERARY EDITOR: Emily Ragland

ART & DESIGN EDITOR: Amy Keuter

ASSISTANT ART EDITOR: Britney Meeks

ASSISTANT DESIGN EDITOR: Jennifer Smith

COPY EDITORS:

Mallory Bass
Courtney Simon

SHORT STORY & DRAMA EDITORS:

Amelia Bobo
Jennifer Ley

CREATIVE NONFICTION EDITORS:

Camille Garbo
Emily Mitchell

POETRY EDITORS:

Carley Baker
Ashley Cirilli
Holly Hosford
Mary-Crosby Turner

PUBLICITY:

Jayne Kathryn Denson
Caroline Walker

STAFF:

Annie Barraza
Jordyn Eiland
Andrew Kennedy
Spencer Mills
Rivers Rogers

ADVISOR: Gerry Wilson

Magazine Awards

GOLD CROWN, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, Columbia University, New York (*Images 2004*)

HIGHEST AWARD, National Council of Teachers of English (*Images 2004*)

Student Awards

MISSISSIPPI LITERARY COMPETITION: Amy Keuter, first prize, short story; Emily Ragland, honorable mention, short story; Mallory Bass, third prize, essay.

SCHOLASTIC WRITING AWARDS: Gold Keys to Amelia Bobo, poetry, and Rivers Rogers, essay.

IMAGES PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST: Portfolio winners—Jeremy Smith, first prize; Carlee Hill, second prize; Emily Latham, third prize; Ashley Howard and Mary Jordan Kirkland, honorable mention. Awards for individual photographs—Emilee Peebles, first prize; Lauren Wakefield, second prize; Caroline Blevins, third prize; Jessie Stribling and Kathleen Kirkland, honorable mention.

Acknowledgements

The design concept for *Images 2005* was inspired by Amy Keuter's art entitled *Calliope, Melpomene, & Terpsichore*, and by Gerard Manley Hopkins's lines from the poem "To R.B."

The *Images* staff wishes to thank all who submitted writing, art, and photographs to the magazine and especially art teacher Susan Ingram and her students for their cooperation. The staff also expresses gratitude to the Jackson Academy Association for their continuing and generous support.

Thanks also to the staff at Service Printers for their time and assistance.

Colophon

Images 2005 was produced on Apple computers using QuarkXPress 6.1. Cover stock is 80# Gloss Cover; text stock is 80# Loe Gloss Text White. The primary text font is Century Gothic; the accent font, *Satisfaction*. Font sizes range from 8–140. Accent color is Pantone 273. Smaller art works and all photographs were scanned on an Epson Perfection 2400 at school; art slides were scanned by students on the printer's Heidelberg Nexscan. Color separation, printing, and binding were done by Service Printers, Jackson, Mississippi.



Editorial Policy

Images is a project of the creative writing classes at Jackson Academy. Students in grades nine through twelve may submit their writing, art, and photography. In an anonymous screening process, the staff considers submissions and selects works for publication based on creativity, literary quality, maturity of style, and variety. Art works are selected on the basis of quality and relevance to the writing. Editors reserve the right to make technical corrections. Authors and artists retain all rights to their individual works.

The views expressed in published works are those of individual students and do not reflect the views of the *Images* staff, advisor, administrators, or board of Jackson Academy.

short stories & drama

- 6 THE DICTIONARY ★ Amy Keuter
- 30 WE CAN WORK IT OUT ★ Emily Ragland
- 63 BA BA, GRANNY ★ Jordyn Eiland
- 86 TEXAS ★ Jayne Kathryn Denson

art

Cover art: CALLIOPE, MELPOMENE,
& TERPSICHORE ★ Amy Keuter

- 7 LIKE A POLAROID PICTURE ★ Amy Keuter
- 12 COLD FEET ★ Lauren Wakefield
- 14 CHARLOTTE JUMPING ★ Laura Skelton
- 16 ADDICTED TO BASS ★ Lauren Wakefield
- 19 FRENCH KISS ★ Carlee Hill
- 20 NATURE'S TEARS ★ Emilee Peeples
- 25 PATCHWORK ★ Emily Latham
- 27 MISS BAILEY ★ Amy Keuter
- 29 WATCHED ★ Lauren Wakefield
- 31 THE HUG ★ Lauren Wakefield
- 32 VERTIGO ATTACK ★ Emilee Peeples
- 36 NO RIDERS ★ Emily Latham
- 39 GIANTS ★ Jeremy Smith
- 40 FAITH LIKE A CHILD ★ Lauren Wakefield
- 42 ROSES ★ William Cole
- 45 WONDER ★ Caroline Blevins
- 46 DESTIN HOUSES ★ Charlotte Skelton

creative nonfiction

- 21 MIMI'S LAUGH ★ Holly Hosford
- 41 BREATHING ★ Mallory Bass
- 50 THE SPIRIT OF THIS PLACE ★ Kaley McCluskey
- 77 MISS AUDREY ★ Rivers Rogers

- 48 HAND IN HAND ★ Jessie Stribling
- 51 THE RETURN OF TOMMY ★ Charlotte Skelton
- 52 RUSTIC LIFE ★ Jeremy Smith
- 55 BEHIND THE LATTICE ★ Laura Skelton
- 57 COFFEEHOUSE SERENADE ★ Kaley McCluskey
- 58 WHEN IN ROME ★ Holly Hosford
- 61 ROYAL INSPIRATION ★ Rachel McDuffie
- 62 DECISIONS ★ Rachel McDuffie
- 69 MR. MAN ★ Kimbrell Spencer
- 71 COFFEE BREAK ★ Carlee Hill
- 72 BIG LITTLE BUTTERFLY ★ Charlotte Skelton
- 74 DANCING HANDS ★ Kaley McCluskey
- 76 SHOES AND PURSE ★ Laura Skelton
- 80 ON THE ROAD TOGETHER ★ David Whitley
- 83 BUNNICULA'S REVENGE ★ Amy Keuter
- 84 STEPPING IN ★ Jessie Stribling
- 87 WORRYWART ★ Laura Skelton
- 90 THE B.O.M.A ★ Emilee Peeples
- 92 OVERSHADOWED ★ Jeremy Smith

poems

Title page: DAUGHTERS OF ZEUS ★ Amelia Bobo

15 CLUMSY ★ Mary Crosby Turner

16 BETWEEN BELIEF & QUESTION ★ Amelia Bobo

17 STEAM ★ Britney Meeks

18 I WANT TO BE ★ Mallory Bass

HOPEFUL SIGNS ★ Emily Mitchell

23 SEAMS HOLD LOVE ★ Annie Barraza

24 INFECTIOUS LAUGHTER ★ Amelia Bobo

UNSUNG ★ Emily Ragland

25 NIGHT ★ Caroline Walker

26 ABSOLUTION ★ Emily Ragland

28 MISSING YOU ★ Holly Hosford

29 ANNIVERSARY ★ Amelia Bobo

37 EMPTY ROCKING CHAIR ★ Camille Garbo

GREY ★ Andrew Kennedy

38 DIVORCE ★ Elizabeth Walker

CLIMBING ★ Mallory Bass

43 FADING GRACE ★ Emily Ragland

44 RAIN TO LAUGHTER ★ Holly Hosford

DADDY ★ Carley Baker

46 NIGHTFALL ★ Britney Meeks

47 DESTIN BABY ★ Mary Crosby Turner

48 SATURDAY ASHES ★ Emily Ragland

54 I AM ME ★ Courtney Simon

56 IN THE MORNING ★ Spencer Mills

SEE Y'ALL LATER ★ Caroline Walker

59 JOURNEY TOWARDS ROME ★ Colette Jackson

60 WHAT LOVE COSTS TODAY ★ Ellie Durham

SELECTING A HUSBAND ★ Camille Garbo

68 THE INCIDENT WITH THE SANDWICH

★ Amy Keuter

70 A NEW YORK LIFE ★ Rivers Rogers

MORNING IN PARIS ★ Rob Derivaux

73 PARADISE / PARAÍSO ★ Ashley Cirilli

75 ONE LAST DIP ★ Ellie Durham

80 FOR HELEN AND ANNA ★ Jennifer Smith

81 FORGOTTEN? OR MISSED? ★ Jennifer Ley

82 BECAUSE I KNEW YOU WERE COMING

★ Ellie Durham

85 THAT NIGHT ★ Ashley Cirilli

92 MIRAGE ★ Ashley Cirilli

The Dictionary

Amy Keuter

It's NOVEMBER AT NEW SARPY ELEMENTARY.

Myrtle is smiling to herself as orange and ginger-finted leaves flutter by her. She is happy because she thinks today is the day she'll fit in. She is wearing her brand new khaki draw-string cargo pants that she got at Gap Kids. All the cool kids go there. She had seen Cassandra, one of the most popular girls in school, wearing the exact same pair. Myrtle desperately wants to make friends with Cassandra and her friends. So does everyone else. Along with the pants, she is wearing a light pink shirt that says "I have nothing to wear." She isn't feeling too comfortable, for she is a size L girl in a size XS shirt. She had to get the pants in the biggest size and they are still a little snug, but Myrtle doesn't care. She is

wearing the cool pants.

"Is there Vaseline on your teeth?" a mousy voice asks from behind Myrtle. It's Myrtle's best friend, Teddy. Teddy is a child prodigy. Well, that's what his mom says. He is wearing what he wears every day: a white short-sleeved button shirt, a red bowtie, and brown pants hiked up to his waist. His ashy blonde hair is slicked to the side Dapper Dan style, and his big, green plastic glasses sit at the edge of his nose. He sits on the cement and leans against a brick wall. He has a heavy Merriam-Webster dictionary in his lap. He is doing what he does every day: flipping through the dictionary. His right index finger stops a page and points at a word. He memorizes the word, saying it will prepare him for



LIKE A POLAROID PICTURE / mixed media / Amy Keuter

seems to splash across Teddy's face.

college entrance exams. Myrtle thinks this is ridiculous because they are only in the fifth grade.

"Hey, Teddy. No, I'm happy." She pushes the stray bangs out of her eyes and raises her hands in a "V" and cocks her hip. She asks giddily, "You notice anything different?"

"Hmmm." Teddy looks at her, nodding his head, and does the weird mumbling thing that he does whenever he prepares an answer to a question. "Well, you mean besides looking absolutely ludicrous posing like that?"

"Umm... yeah?"

"Well," he begins, "first of all, your hair is in a slight side part instead of the usual center part. And your fingernail polish is starting to chip."

Myrtle looks at Teddy with fascination. Teddy is a peculiar kid. He tends to notice things that are not too obvious and doesn't notice things that are. It concerns Myrtle because she is afraid that someday Teddy may chase after a housefly across the street and not notice a car less than ten feet away, about to turn him into a pancake. He is like an ant. Ants can't see large objects, only small ones. "Why would I be happy about chipped nail polish?" Myrtle asks.

"Well, I don't know. Some people might be happy about chipped nail polish because then it gives them an excuse to take it all off and put on a new color. Some people like

change."

Myrtle looks up and down at the outfit he wears every day. "Unlike you," she mutters.

"You're right. I'm absolutely terrified of change."

"And no, that's not what's different. Check out these cool pants."

"You're happy about that? Sheesh, you're materialistic."

Myrtle does not know what this word means and feels fluffs of frustration. "You know, sometimes I wish you didn't use your big words in our conversations. It makes me want to take that dictionary and throw it at your face."

"It means you are preoccupied with the material things in life. Just things, rather than the spiritual and intellectual."

"I just want to fit in, Teddy."

"But you don't have to sacrifice who you are."

"Wearing only spandex biker shorts and sweatshirts my mom decorated that say things like 'I love my grandma' is *not* who I am."

"Neither are Cassandra's pants."

"I didn't say anything about that."

"You didn't have to."

Silence drenches the air between them. Teddy flips through the dictionary, and it sounds like a crowd cheering from far away. Then there is a soft thud of Teddy's fingertip pointing at a word. The word *Eureka!* seems

to splash across Teddy's face.

"Hey, this sounds like a good word: 'mammary,'" Teddy says.

"Oohh," Myrtle marvels "Mam-ma-ry. Mammary. I like it. It sounds pretty. What does it mean? I want to slip it into conversation sometimes."

"It says 'of, or relating to, lying near, or affecting the mammae.'"

"What's a mammae?"

He flips back a few pages and scrolls down. Teddy then seems embarrassed and starts mumbling. "Um," he says, "nevermind."

"WHAT? What does it mean? TELL ME!"

"No. It's a bad word. Don't use it."

"What does it mean, Teddy?"

"I don't want to say."

Myrtle lunges for the dictionary. Teddy must have seen it coming because he whips the dictionary to the opposite side, grasping it with both hands. He shakes his head at Myrtle.

"Gimme it!" Myrtle grunts, reaching for the big book. She nearly gets it, and Teddy has to act fast. He licks the cover of the dictionary. Myrtle's face contorts into disgust. Seeing this, Teddy starts to lick it all over, front and back cover. He wears a smug smile of satisfaction.

"What are we? Third graders?" Myrtle asks.

"It's working though, right?"

"I hate you."

All of a sudden, three boys who regularly make Teddy's life a nightmare throw some pebbles at him and chant "Teddy, Teddy, Teddy!" Only Myrtle and his parents are allowed to call him "Teddy." If he doesn't respect a person, they have to call him "Theodore." Myrtle thinks it should be the other way around, because a name like "Theodore" is just asking for it. But that's Teddy.


"I hope you choke, you beef-witted nin-nies!!!" Teddy shouts at them. That is not an insult people hear every day, and being the average beef-witted bullies, naturally they feel confused. They walk away with mental notes to look it up in the dictionary later, mental notes that will only linger for five seconds. Teddy always says that confusion is the best defense against an enemy. Myrtle worries that one day Teddy will get a bully smarter than he is. But who could be smarter than Teddy?

But the bullying isn't over. Cassandra and her self-described "crew" march over in unison towards Myrtle and Teddy. Cassandra whips her long blonde hair to the side and wears an evil grin on her face. Myrtle forgets to breathe because she is thrilled that she is now in close proximity to such blinding popularity. Cassandra and her "crew" stop simultaneously two feet in front of Teddy and Myrtle.

"Hello, Myrtle. Theodore."

"Teddy, Teddy, Teddy!"

... throw some pebbles at him and chant



Myrtle manages to squeak out a small "hi." Teddy briefly looks at Cassandra, shows no reaction on his face, and goes back to his dictionary.

"Nice pants, Myrtle," Cassandra says.

"Thanks!gotthematGapKids," Myrtle says in one swift breath.

"Oh, really."

Myrtle nods her head quickly. The sweet but evil grin on Cassandra's face turns to pure evil.

"So what were you doing in my closet? Stealing my clothes?"

"I wasn't—"

"Oh. That's right, those couldn't possibly be my clothes, because you wouldn't fit into mine!" Cassandra says. Her friends chuckle behind her and say, "Good one, Cass," like it's the best insult they've ever heard.

Myrtle has heard this sort of thing before, but never from Cassandra. She doesn't cry. Her look of admiration changes to a look of revenge against her newfound enemy.

"You—you—you—" Myrtle stutters. She is trying to come up with the most horrible thing she could say. She can't think of anything. It is frustrating when a girl doesn't know any bad words when she needs them the most. Myrtle has to come up with something quickly. So she comes up with a word that her dear friend told her was bad.

"Cassandra—you—you—I HOPE YOU CHOKE, YOU MAMMARY!!!" she finally shouts.

She hurls Teddy's spittle-covered dictionary at Cassandra's shin. Cassandra yelps. She starts to run away, looking for the nearest teacher. Her friends sprint after her. Teddy looks at his hands, now empty.

"OH MY GOSH, TEDDY!!" Myrtle gives her friend a big bear hug. "I like, so stood up for myself right there! It's like you always said: 'Confusing your enemy is the best defense!'"

"Yes, but I didn't say violence was. Can I have my dictionary back please?"

"Oh, here." Myrtle picks up the dictionary, now fanned out on the ground. She hands it to Teddy, wiping off the dust as she does so. She suddenly notices she is also wiping off Teddy's spit. At this realization, she drops the dictionary, all twenty pounds of it, in Teddy's lap. Teddy squeals in pain.

"Ew!" Myrtle says, not realizing that Teddy is in agony, "I just felt your spit!"

"MYRTLE!" Teddy yells in a high-pitched voice. His face is scarlet and the veins in his forehead that have never surfaced before are about to pop out.

"Oh, come on, you wimp. That didn't hurt."

"HOW WOULD YOU KNOW!?"

Somewhere during this conversation, Cassandra tattles to old Miss Burgess that Myrtle threw a dictionary at her and that Myrtle called her a "mammary." Miss Burgess, upon hearing the news, storms across the playground. Miss Burgess likes to punish her

kids by locking them in the dark coatroom for a while before sending them to the principal's office. Knowing this, Myrtle decides to beat her to it. So she runs inside to the classroom, Miss Burgess tottering behind her. She runs into the coatroom and turns off the lights. Miss Burgess yells behind the door as she locks it, "You better be thinking about what you did, young lady!"

MYRTLE IS INDEED THINKING about what she did. And she is smiling in satisfaction all the while. Myrtle sits on the bench outside the principal's office. Her mother is inside the principal's office with the principal and Miss Burgess. It sounds like they are laughing, which confuses Myrtle but she doesn't think anything of it. She sees a box marked "Lost and Found." She gets up and looks inside. She finds a sweatshirt with an iron-on decal of kittens sitting in an Easter basket. She also finds a pair of stretch pants. She looks up at the secretary, who is watching her every move. "Good thing I found these," she lies. She goes in the bathroom and changes. She throws the cargo pants in the Lost and Found bin. Her mother is waiting outside.

Myrtle's day is over, except for one thing: "Mother," she says as they walk through the parking lot, "What's a mammary?"

"It's a gland," Mrs. Turtle says, "You'll learn it in biology class someday."

"Oh... okay."

Myrtle is still not satisfied with the answer but drops the subject anyway. She climbs inside the car and sees her older sister Dana up front.

"Well! Look at Fatty! She's a total rebel now!" Dana exclaims.

Myrtle usually ignores her sister's insults, but she has had it. Myrtle does her best to come up with a witty and fresh comeback.

"Well, look at Ugly!" Myrtle starts, "she's— she's—"

"C'mon, Fatty, give me that rebel yell... mo', mo', mo'." Dana has an unusual habit of breaking into song whenever a phrase of that song comes up. Nobody minds it, for Dana has a lovely singing voice.

"Dana, dear..." Mrs. Turtle intervenes, "there will be no Billy Idol music in this car. That's the Devil's music. Oh, and stop calling your sister names."

Myrtle, who is still trying to look for an insult, remembers a tee shirt that she read once. "Dana... I may be fat, but you're ugly and I can lose weight." Myrtle proudly smiles for thinking of it.

"I'm not ugly."

Dana's right, she is not ugly. In fact, she is the most popular and beautiful sixth grader at New Sarpy Elementary. Everybody wants to be friends with Dana. Especially fifth graders like Cassandra. Myrtle gives up on the clever comeback and pulls out a sheet of paper. She grabs the big fat blue pencil that

"I may be fat, but
you're ugly and
I can lose weight."

first graders use. Her mother says that she is too young for mechanical and No. 2 pencils. She draws a picture of Cassandra falling into a pool of sharks shaped like Merriam-Webster dictionaries. She labels the top "Cassandra about to get eaten by mammary sharks." She chuckles at her own creative wittiness.

to say, is wearing the usual. At recess, Teddy sits in the usual spot. Myrtle paces nearby and grouses about her social life, or lack thereof. Teddy listens, not looking at his dictionary once. Cassandra and her posse walk across the playground. Seeing the stampeding lemmings, Teddy immediately opens his dictionary.

Myrtle paces nearby and grouses about her social life, or lack thereof.



COLD FEET / acrylic / Lauren Wakefield

THE NEXT DAY AT SCHOOL, Myrtle decides that she likes her new lost and found outfit. Teddy was right; the spandex pants and iron-on sweatshirts really do suit her. Teddy, needless

"Wha—wait, what are you doing, Teddy?" Myrtle asks.

"The monster is coming," Teddy says.

"Oh, dear... Dana?"

"No, worse."

"Hey, Myrtle!" Cassandra calls. Myrtle turns around.

Cassandra is wearing an oversized bandage on her shin. "You're gonna pay, Myrtle! You gave me a paper cut!"

Teddy snickers but continues to read his dictionary. Myrtle notices that Cassandra is wearing a light pink shirt that says "I have nothing to wear," the exact same shirt Myrtle wore the day before, the only part of the outfit that Myrtle did not copy from Cassandra.

"So..." Myrtle begins. She suddenly has this surge of confidence. "What were you doing in my closet? Stealing my clothes?"

Cassandra's friends start to laugh.

"What?" Cassandra says. "Why would I steal your clothes? I mean, you have the worst clothes ever!"

"Good one, Cass," one of Cassandra's friends says.

"I mean, look at that, an iron-on sweat-shirt of a kitten and spandex pants that don't match?" Cassandra says.

"Ohmahgah," Stacy, one of Cassandra's followers, says, "I think I saw that in the Lost and Found bin the other day."

"Really?" Cassandra smirks at Myrtle. "So, what—are you too poor to buy clothes so you steal from Lost and Found?"

"Uh ... erm ..." Myrtle stutters and loses

her composure. "Uh, no, I lost them, and then I found them—in the Lost and Found—hence the name 'Lost and Found.'" It was a lie, of course, but she didn't know what else to say.

"Yeah, sure... Fatty."

Teddy gasps behind her. Tears brim in Myrtle's eyes. When he sees this, Teddy immediately stands up and throws down the heavy dictionary.

"OKAY! That's it!"

It is an amazing sight. It seems like Teddy has grown three inches taller, and his voice is suddenly deeper. The veins in his forehead are bulging again. He is redder than ever before. Myrtle looks at his pants. She can see that his pants are too short and his socks show. It seems impossible, but he has grown overnight.

"I have had it with you, Cassandra! What is wrong with you? Do you pick on other people to feel better about yourself? Do you enjoy having these friends of yours use you for your social status, so you feel validated? Do you exaggerate your injuries so you can get attention!?"

Cassandra appears frightened, but she doesn't move. By this time, the group of friends standing behind her starts to dissipate.

Teddy continues. "Cassandra... Why do you have to be such a bi—"

Crash!

They turn around to see what the com-

motion is. Mr. Rubik, the janitor, has accidentally knocked over the trashcan.

"Sorry, kids!" Mr. Rubik waves. "Carry on."

Myrtle and Teddy look at Cassandra. She just stands there. Stunned. Her friends are no longer standing behind her.

"Um... Cassandra?" Myrtle asks, a little concerned. "Are you okay?"

Cassandra doesn't answer. She walks away.

Myrtle looks at her knight in shining armor. "Think she'll be okay?"

"She'll live," Teddy says.

Miss Burgess yells from the other side of the playground that recess is over. Myrtle and Teddy start walking back to the classroom.

"Did you get a growth spurt last night?" Myrtle asks him.

"What do you mean?" Teddy's voice is still deeper sounding.

"Never mind."

"Um, okay." Teddy's voice cracks. Myrtle laughs.

"Now there's the old Teddy I know!"

"What are you talking about?"

"Nothing."

"Hey, Teddy. There's something that's been bothering me."

"What's that, Myrtle?"

"What's a mammary?"

"I'll tell you one day. When we're older."

★ A.K.

if you do
graceful
worry
I tried h
over to
needed
nerf de
tery, n.
forming
the eye
And the
ney to s
On tip to



CHARLOTTE JUMPING / acrylic / Laura Skelton

Clumsy

After Charles Simic's "Country Fair"

If you didn't watch the graceless child,
don't worry—
They did, and she twirled her faded pink tutu
over to the corner.

As for the needed grace,
they saw her fallen stumble.
What a jittery, nervous day
to be performing for the crowd.

Then the elevator music crept on
and the girl began her journey to stay with the beat
on tiptoes, her stretched (by big sister) shoes sliding,
while her mother gasped.

She was scared for her little girl, the clumsy child
who continued to stumble with every step and turn.
The girl finished and struck her pose.
And the mother sighed.

★ *Mary Crosby Turner*

Between Belief and Question

I am the outskirts of a cloud
rising in a storm, an hour-glass
falling a few steps behind.
At night I am the cock crowing
at betrayal, the serpent hissing
at holy feet.

Remember Terrapin Station,
when we said goodbye. I've
forgotten feeling pink at the
age of two.

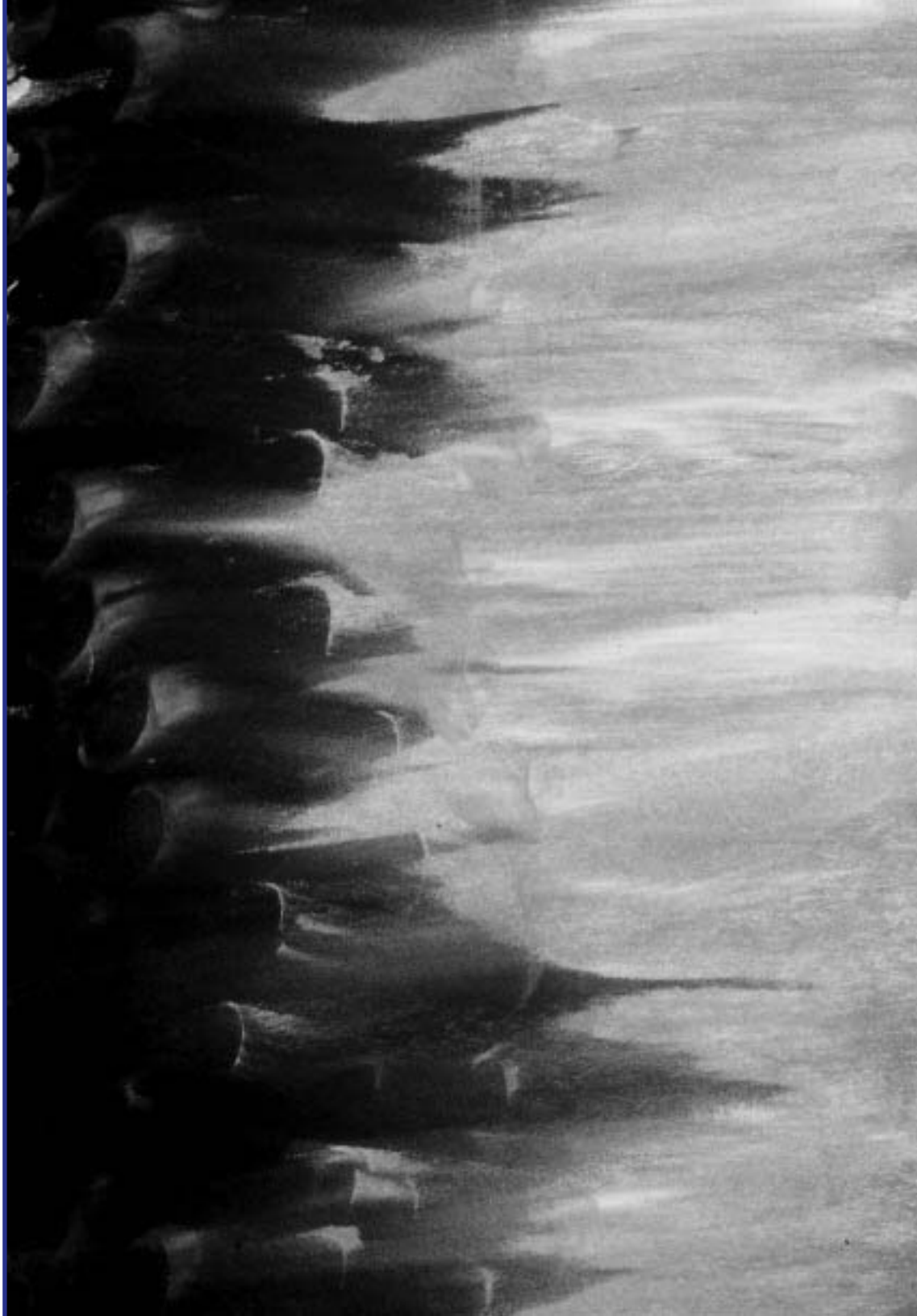
I am a Model T buzzing into
Suzie Q.'s driveway, a mahogany
record player high above the reach
of a curious child. Sundays, I
am a pink lemonade pool-side,
a saxophone played by raw fingers
under a vacant street lamp.

I want to be the air spinning around
a child's game on the beaches
of Tahiti; no worries, no wrongs.

But the gray place between belief
and question is the uncertainty:
Am I what I claim to be?

★ *Amelia Bobo*

ADDICTED TO BASS / oil / Lauren Wakefield





Steam

We pass the snow mountains
as if they're playing on a screen
in my living room, instead of
out my tour bus window.

As if playing on a screen,
I met a boy who stayed with me.
On the bus our eyes never met
but every night I would meet him,

this boy who stayed with me
in the stillness and talked about life.
Snow everywhere, at night we would meet
like old friends it seemed, and talk as the steam rolled on...

In the stillness we talked about life,
snow everywhere the nights we would meet.
Like old friends, we talked. The steam rolled on,
as if playing on a screen in my living room.

★ *Britney Meeks*

I Want To Be

In that warm-colored room
with the whispers.
Milky brown curls
hang over murky lakewater eyes
and I want to be on an oak-bench swing
echoing across the surface,
lighting your eyes
like the candles across the room,
flickering in every corner,
holding your patient stare
too strong for my eyes to stay,
darting away
to the brown canvas rug
on the smooth wood floor.

★ *Mallory Bass*

Hopeful Signs

Bamboo my panda bear, my Dad teaching me
to play guitar, a black and white photo of my grandmother,
sundresses with cowboy boots, "never taking anything seriously,"
my pink Barbie shirt, big sunglasses and baseball caps,
school afternoons at Parker's, long summer days on the Pearl,
Nicholas Sparks romance novels, the CABLE girls from ninth grade,
flowers from the Tennessee boys, flat tire in the Camino
on the way to Monticello, Key's boat never working,
making wishes on dandelions, pink high heels,
living in a house with a wrap-around porch,
umbrella picnics in the front yard, friendship bracelets,
the special tree in Belhaven, being able to attend Bonaroo,
cops three times in one night, ginger ale & Curve cologne,
trips to Starkville in the rain, dark green polo shirts,
"Me and my Bobby McGee," Tea Tree-Lavender Chapstick,
Tiffany's heart necklace, *Sha-na-na* on Friday nights, Sunday night
car ride confessions, blondes who have more fun, fairy and
sun tattoos, getting stuck in the mud in Gluckstadt for four hours,
late night phone calls, the castle on Christmas Eve,
weekly Kiefers' obsessions, concerts in the car, riding
horses at the farm, living in Cali with Jennifer, Culinary School,
random roadtrips, baby blue Jeeps, and Rainbow with my dad.

★ *Emily Mitchell*

Milky brown curls hang over murky lakewater eyes.



FRENCH KISS / photograph / Carlee Hill

NATURE'S TEARS / photograph / Emilee Peebles



Mimi's Laugh

IT'S EARLY ON A SUNDAY MORNING and I'm sitting at the kitchen table, blinking the sleep out of my tired eyes. The green McCarty bunny that crouches in the middle blurs in and out of focus. The phone rings, its hollow noises mixing with the bubbles and perks of the coffeemaker. Momma answers the phone, her voice loud and slow, too happy for the early morning. She shuffles over to where I'm sitting and perches crosslegged on the corner of the table. Listening to the one-sided conversation, her smile drops into a thin, straight line and her forehead wrinkles. She hangs up the phone and looks at me. In a low, shaky voice she says, "That was P.J. Mimi just found out she has breast cancer." She squeezes my shoulder and goes back to her bedroom, the belt of her pink bathrobe dragging on the floor behind her. I hear the

water creaking in the pipes as Mom turns on the shower. Church starts in a few hours. My head droops and I press my nose onto the table, staring at the splintered grains of wood. I try to conjure memories of Mimi.

I REMEMBER MOM DRESSING ME UP in a sundress with watermelons on the front. The collar itches the bottom of my neck and the matching red bow tugs on my hair. She sends me outside on the front porch to watch for Mimi and P.J. like someone waiting to greet the Queen. The oversized, cream-colored Cadillac turns into the cove and stops in front of our house. The September sun bounces off the shiny car and makes spots when I close my eyes. I skip down to the edge of our yard and wait, the curb hot on my bare feet. The passenger door swings

Holly Hosford

open and a tall, older man with hunched shoulders steps out. P.J. looks like he could be in the movie *Grumpy Old Men*. He has enormous elephant ears that droop past his jaw and gray eyebrows that sit over his eyes like caterpillars. He gives me a crooked smile and strokes the top of my head, his bony, sun-spotted fingers getting tangled in my curls. I wrap my four-year-old arms around his knee, hugging the only part of him I can reach. I bury my face in his khaki pants, inhaling the smell of leather and smoke. Pulling me from his leg, he nods in the direction of the car, and in his deep, scratchy voice says, "We brought Topsy and Gin-gin with us." I squeal and, flinging open the car door, dive into the back seat. I hop back out, clutching two balls of wiry fur. Topsy and Gin-gin are two Chihuahuas named after Mimi's favorite pastime. I fall back onto the carpet of sunburnt grass and let the dogs run around me, their rough tongues licking my face and their muddy paws staining my watermelon dress. I squint and notice the figure blocking the sun from my eyes.

"Well hi, Holly," says the thick, crackling voice. "How are ya, sweet thing?" Mimi is my step-grandmother. In her seventies, she has long, white hair that she used to let me brush. Her long fingers are swollen with arthritis from her days filled with hours of tennis. Mimi is the kind of woman who has wide-brimmed hats in every color that match shoes that match purses that match dresses. Today, her soft waves are swept into a tight French twist and

held back with vicious looking bobby pins. She wears a red dress and shiny red shoes. Each fingernail is painted the perfect color of apple red. She holds my chin in her hands for a moment, examining me with her alert, blue eyes, before turning and gliding to the front door. Her high heels make a clicking noise on the bricks of our front porch. I am left in the warm grass with the dogs sleeping on my stomach and Mimi's perfume still saturating the air.

ANOTHER MEMORY SURFACES: my sister Samantha and I visiting Mimi and P.J. at their house in Sandestin, Florida. In their neighborhood, the houses and yards are the same, white houses with brown trim and square patches of grass. Inside, everything seems to be white, and the air smells like the ocean. There are statues of owls everywhere, and they follow me as I move through the house. The white tile floor is cold on my feet when I push myself out of the bed in the mornings. We spend the days on their secret part of the beach, secluded from the highrises barely visible through the thick sea air. The sound of the frothy waves breaking on the white sand echoes in my head. Samantha and Mimi cook themselves in the suffocating sun while I splash through the salt water. The green-gray clouds close in on the ocean, making the horizon disappear. Splattering the beach into a connect-the-dot pattern, the rain pours down on us. We wrap up in our towels and race to the car, the raindrops

cooling our brown shoulders.

On the last day, Mimi takes us to the beauty shop. In the middle of crowded shopping malls and restaurants, the small beach shop is surrounded by pots of flowers and wind chimes made of seashells. Walking inside, I am assaulted by the smell of shampoo, clean and white. Mimi has her hair done by Bridget, a sixty-year-old Swedish lady who towers above us at five feet eleven inches. She shouts over the sounds of the hair-dryer, screaming profanity in a smoke-filled voice. My grandmother loves her. That night we get all dressed up and go to the country club for dinner. Dressed in an Audrey Hepburn black dress and pearls, Mimi orders a martini. She bites the olives off the toothpick and downs the drink. Then she and P.J. dance. Swinging perfectly around the dance floor, Mimi looks back at Samantha and me and tosses her head in a throaty laugh.

NOW THAT SAME LAUGH DANCES its way through the cracked door of a Florida hospital room. Mimi ignores the tubes in her arms just as she tries to ignore the cancer flowing through her brown, leathery body. She tries to hide it with makeup and hair that is combed into a neat bun, but I hear it in her rough breathing. I see it in her tired fingers as they tug at the crisp, white bed sheets. The nurse comes to the door and hurries us out of the room. Mimi's laugh follows me down the dark hallway, reminding me of that stylish lady in pearls.

★ J.J.J.

Seams I Hold Love

The smells of cinnamon fill my nose
 as I inhale my childhood.
 I listen to the country crows
 as Grandma and I gather wood

to brighten up the fiery pit
 burning in the living room.
 I prop my feet up and sit.
 Grandma works on the modern loom.

I notice the pace at which she works,
 slower than when I was young.
 The tightly woven yarn now jerks
 her frail fingers until they hang,

lifeless. I'm older now and more aware
 of the aches and pains my Grandma knows.
 I notice the silver tint to her hair,
 and how with each stitch her fragility grows.

I want to show, with words, my love,
 but silence grows along with me.
 Instead, the quiet lurks above
 and I fail to answer a soundless plea.

So, I wrap up in a freshly sewn quilt
 and close my eyes to meet my dreams.
 The awkward silence screams with guilt,
 but my words can't make it past these seams.

★ Annie Barraza



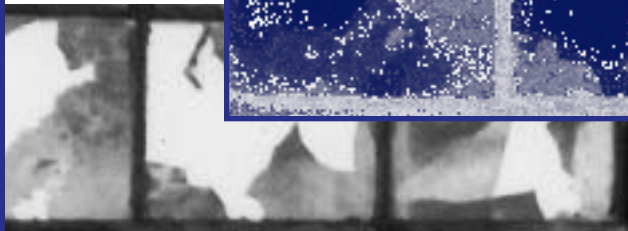
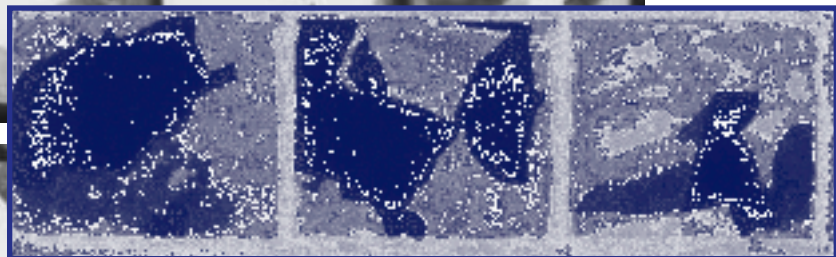
Infectious laughter

My mother buried you
and wept. Preacher told
me your life story, centered
it around Jesus,

called your smile infectious. I
remember it well: you smiling
at me behind a menthol haze,
revealing your rotted teeth.

Preacher tells me you're in a better
place, smiling at our blank faces,
scaring us all into accepting the light.
Tell me, what light did you accept?

★ *Amelia Bobo*



Unsung

To my grandfather Nard,
who built the creaky wooden swing
that hung in their backyard in childhood summers.
I was seven. I did not appreciate
his arthritic hands, folded into shapes
of grotesque finger shadows that would dance
on the walls of his woodshop.
See the fingers that molded my childhood.
See the wrinkles that accumulated on
his sweaty brow, squinting in the dim light.
See the lips that asked for no thanks.
See the ease with which
I accepted the gift of his labor,
never thinking that swings and summers
were anything but my birthright.

★ *Emily Ragland*

Night

After Li Young Lee's "Words for Worry"

Another word for night is luminosity:

Luminosity glows in the darkness
for starlets in the vastness of the sky.

Luminosity cascades upon the silent lake
before warming it slightly.

Another word for day is purity,
another word, crisp.

Yet another is one-who-goes-away,
yet another, confident-to-return.

So many words for day:
The next-step-in-our-lives,
Heaven's-latest-gift
our-Creator's-newest-vision

but only one word for night,
and occasionally a phrase,
which is to say the night
withholds mysteries beyond
the eyesight of a man.

★ *Caroline Walker*



Absolution

The suffocating stillness makes me afraid
to breathe, to disturb
the precarious silence. Ice drifts to the bottom
of your tea glass,
the sweat on the outside dripping
onto the wicker table.
Neither you nor I want to talk about the fight last night.
Slamming doors and whispered curses
seem out of place on
a Sunday afternoon. The Gilberts' lawn mower cranks and sputters,
but we drown in silence.
I take the frond of your prized fern and strip off the leaves,
shred them and toss
them in the flowerbed by the monkey grass.

The swing groans
against the injustice of the heat. Your legs move
in a synchronized
motion, but the grace from your ballerina days has faded
into spider veins
and pale remorse. Without a word, you hop
off the wicker swing,
the intricate pattern branded onto the backs of your thighs.
But before you go inside,
you put your hand on the top of my head just long
enough to let love drip
from your fingertips. The swing stays in motion,
grazing the green shutter,
and the silence between us melts into absolution.

★ Emily Ragland

The swing groans against



the injustice of the heat.



Miss BAILEY / mixed media / Amy Keuter

Missing You

To my sister, Summer 2004

Today I forgot that you weren't here,
that you had left me alone
in this house that is too big
and too clean without your mess.

Through sleepy earmuffs
I heard your shower running.
I was surprised that you were awake
in the darkness,
even more surprised to find
an empty room and water
running through creaky pipes.

I set four places for dinner,
but your plate was empty.
The three of us ate in silence,
and after dinner I washed
the empty plate anyway,
the soapy water rinsing over the loneliness.

I needed you today
so I called your phone—
shocked by the cold voice
commanding me to dial the area code
for a long distance call.
Long distance?
I thought you lived across the hall.

★ Holly Hosford





WATCHED / color pencil / Lauren Wakefield

Anniversary

On a soft Sunday night
the roads seem lonely;
(or is that me?)

Paved over in pity,
lined with uncomfortable
fluorescent lights. Black
tar fascinated by police
cars: gripping rubber
to pavement, ever vigilant,
waiting for someone to
cross the line.

And all the while, I've been
waiting for you, praying that
the hint of wind kissing
my face might keep me
awake just to see if
the phone rang, so that
just once
I wouldn't be an
imposition, so that

just once,
maybe I would
be the wheel and you
the tar.

★ *Amelia Bobo*

We Can Work It Out

There's a chance that we may fall apart before too long. We can work it out, We can work it out...

—“We Can Work It Out,” the Beatles

Emily Ragland

“GO AHEAD AND SET THE TABLE, Stephanie,” Mom says. “Trey and your father will be home any minute, and we have to head to Linens ‘n Things before they close. They have a sale on some towels that Trey needs for his room before he goes back to college.” She peers into the oven to check on the bubbling lasagna. I trace the pattern on the placemat, red ribbon weaving in and out of navy flowers, with my fingers. Mom looks back at me, puckering her lips together as if she had drunk the milk two weeks past the expiration date. I push my chair out from the table before she can pinch my arm to remind me to follow her directions. She reaches into the cabinet to get the glasses.

I pull out four forks and knives from the silverware drawer. “Where is he anyway? I haven’t seen him all day,” I say, shutting the drawer. The ice machine makes a horrific grinding noise as the powdery ice pours into the glass.

The light flashes on as Mom opens the refrigerator door and falls on the top of Mom’s hair, making her gray streaks more evident. Mom fills the glass in her hand with sweet tea and places it on the table. “He’s been at Heather’s for most of the day.” She shakes her head. “You know her parents are getting a divorce after twenty-six years. What a shame. But I still can’t believe that they would do that to their kids after all those



The Hug / oil / Lauren Wakefield

She blows
the bangs out
of her face, the
gray roots
merging with
Clairol No. 19
Honey-nut
brown.

Dad kisses the top of my head.
"How is my favorite beauty queen?"



VERTIGO ATTACK / inkprint / Emilee Peeples

years." I hear the garage door open; the vibrations make the kitchen wall shake. She says, "I wonder if that's your Dad or Trey. Your Dad said he would try to get off work early." She blows the bangs out of her face, the gray at the roots merging with Clairol No.19 Honey-nut brown.

The back door slams. "I smell something good. I hope my girls haven't eaten it all themselves," Dad says. He walks into the kitchen, his jacket thrown over one arm and papers under the other. He puts them on the counter and loosens his tie.

Mom stares at his papers. "John, I have worked all day to get those counters cleaned off. Do you mind taking the papers to your office?" She continues buttering the French bread, gripping the loaf in her hands. Dad rolls his eyes but picks up the files and walks out. We can hear his heavy footsteps on the stairs.

Mom wipes her hands on the dishtowel. "Stephanie, will you finish buttering this bread so I can go check on something?" She follows Dad. The butter is still cold, so I press the knife down to cut the pats of butter. The aluminum foil crinkles as I pull it back from the loaf of bread.

About fifteen minutes later, Mom and Dad come downstairs together. I try not to look at Mom, but she's sniffing and her eyes are red. Dad kisses the top of my head. "How is my favorite beauty queen? I brought you

home a pen that glows in the dark." He takes it out of his pocket. "Pretty cool, isn't it?" He has done this since I was five: bring home trinkets and act as if he had done something impressive or remarkable.

Trey walks in at this moment, talking on his cell phone. "Okay, I will call you after dinner." He holds up his finger to signal for us to be quiet. "I love you too. Bye." He closes his phone and put it on the counter. "What's for dinner? I'm starving."

"Hey, sweetie. How's Heather?" Mom kisses Trey's cheek. "Go ahead and wash your hands. Dinner's ready. I know you must be hungry." Trey heads upstairs, and Mom lifts the plates down from the cabinet, the ones with a triple blue line around the edge. "John, get the salad dressing out. Italian and Ranch."

Dad laughs the way he does when nothing's really funny. "To listen to your mother order me around, you wouldn't think that I had put in a ten hour day at the office." He leans over to look on the bottom shelf for the salad dressings.

Mom comes up behind him and grabs the bottles from the top shelf, shaking the Italian dressing forcefully. "Go ahead and sit down. I've got it from here."

Dad walks over to the table and sits down. Mom pulls open a drawer, takes out a potholder, and closes the drawer. The timer for the lasagna beeps with increasing

urgency. Opening the oven, she pulls out the lasagna and places it on top of the oven.

"Go get your brother, Stephanie."

I open Trey's door without knocking. "Trey, come on." He's lying on his bed and doesn't move. "Seriously, Mom is in a bad mood already." I slam the door.

When Trey comes into the kitchen, all four of us sit at the table. "Stephanie, you want to say the prayer?" Mom says.

"God, thank you for bringing us safely here together tonight as a family. Give peace to the family of Marie Waters and keep the troops in your safe hands," I say. "Amen." Dad clears his throat and I watch Trey and then Mom open their eyes. My prayer melts in the silence of the kitchen as we all stare at each other.

THE NEXT MORNING, I STIR MY RAISIN BRAN

around the bowl, the milk making waves that follow my spoon. "Steph, do you need two water bottles?" Mom says. "I heard the high for today is ninety-seven degrees. I don't want you to get dehydrated." Mom reaches into the fridge again, picking up another Dasani bottle. "This all-star soccer team has taken up so much of your time. I miss having you at home." She tries to brush my hair, but I turn away.

"Coach Weir'll probably bring water in a cooler," I say. "But I'll put two in my bag just in case." Mom leans over and puts the extra

bottle in my soccer bag. Taking her cup of coffee, she walks over to the window and opens the shutters. I put my hand over my face, shielding my eyes from the bright sun. She puts her mug down on the counter and reties her robe. Somehow, she looks older in the morning.

She turns back to me. "I can't believe that you'll be in tenth grade this year. You'll be through with high school before I can blink." She picks up her coffee cup again and takes a long sip. "I'm not ready for my babies to be this old. Trey is twenty, do you realize that?" She sips her coffee again. I put my dirty cereal bowl in the sink.

I hear Dad stomp down the stairs. He's fixing his tie as he comes through the doorway. "Ready, Steph? I have an 8:45 meeting so we have just enough time if I speed." He turns to Mom. "I just drop her off at the soccer complex and pick her up during my lunch break?" Mom nods, but he shakes his head. "It is unbelievable that you couldn't miss a Junior League luncheon this one time." He turn to me. "Let's head out," he says. I grab my soccer bag and follow my dad out the door.

"No kiss for me, Stephanie?" Mom says. I take two steps back and brush her forehead with my lips. She runs her hands through her hair. "I'll see you this afternoon."

Dad stands in the doorway to the garage and says to me, "Come on!" He yells at Mom,

"I'll be home late tonight. Don't bother setting a place for dinner for me." He pops the trunk, motioning for me to throw the bag in. When I get in the car, he moves some papers and puts them in my lap. The Beatles blare out of the stereo as the car cranks. "We can work it out," they sing, until my dad turns it off.

He runs all the stop signs in our neighborhood. "Don't tell your mother. She'll just get mad," he says. I roll down the window and let my hand fly through the air. "What are you doing? The air conditioning is on." He rolls the window right back up.

Whenever Trey used to take me to soccer practice, when he had just gotten his license, he would let me roll down the windows and feel the air between my fingers, and we would listen to the oldies station, singing every word to "Brown-eyed Girl" or "Yellow Submarine." Sometimes Trey would even sing along. I reach down to turn the radio on, but as my hand touches the button, Dad says, "Didn't I tell you that I needed some quiet?" Neither one of us speaks for the rest of the ride.

At the soccer complex, Dad drops me off in the parking lot and doesn't even wait to see if I go inside. He drives off in a hurry, the tires spinning in the gravel.

I AM SITTING IN A BLUE PLASTIC BUCKET CHAIR in the office in the soccer complex, watching

the clock slowly tick. My back is sweaty, the jersey sticking to it. "Stephanie, are you sure you don't need a ride home? Or wanna use the phone to try your father again?" Coach Weir puts his hand on my shoulder.

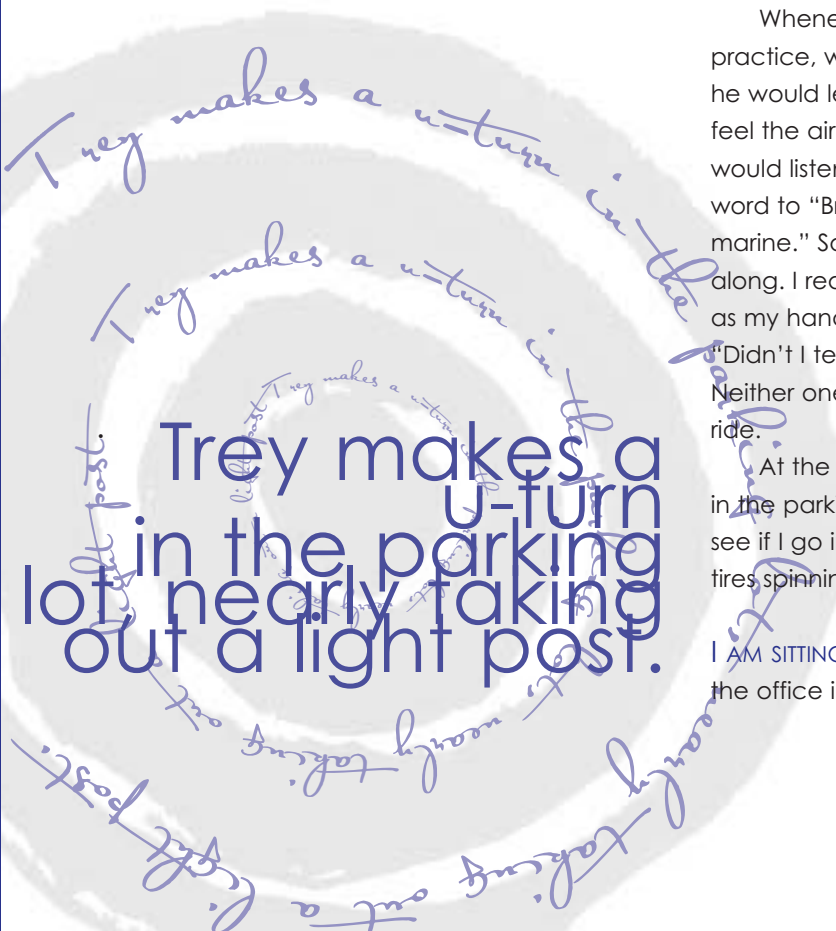
"No thanks. I don't need a ride home. I just called my brother to pick me up. He should be here in a minute. I'm sorry you had to wait." I look at my watch; he should be here in like five minutes. I peer out the window again, watching for Trey.

"There's no hurry. I had to finish up some stuff for the tournament next month anyway." Coach Weir walks back to his office, and his phone starts ringing. I pick at my hangnails, the dead skin peeling off to leave a bloody underneath. I turn my head as the gravel crunches in the parking lot.

I stick my head in Coach's office. "Trey just pulled in. I guess I'll see you at next practice. Have a good afternoon, Coach Weir."

"You, too. See you on Thursday. I hope we have a chance at winning that regional tournament next weekend." Coach Weir waves, and I shut the office door.

I run back down the hall and into the parking lot. The air reeks of freshly mowed grass from the soccer fields. I get into the passenger seat without saying a word. Trey makes a u-turn in the parking lot, nearly taking out a light post. Reaching for the volume button, he turns it to the right and blasts his



Trey makes a u-turn in the parking lot, nearly taking out a light post.

music. My right hand shoots down and turns the power off in the middle of the song.

"Steph, what are you doing? You could have just asked me to switch CDs." He looks up at the CD holder on his sun visor.

"I had to wait for over an hour to get someone to pick me up. Dad didn't even call or anything, and Mom had her cell phone off because she's at some Junior League thing." I stare out the window, refusing to look at Trey.

"I'm sorry, but I don't know what you want me to do. I left Heather's to come pick you up even though we were in the middle of a movie." He picks up the Wendy's cup out of the cup holder and holds it upside down, trying to get the last few ice cubes and drops of Dr. Pepper. "Don't yell at me. I didn't do anything wrong."

"Well, neither did—whatever. It doesn't really matter anyway." I cross my arms across my chest and slump down in the seat.

"What's your problem? I swear, you're turning into Mom. She drives Dad crazy with all that nitpicking if he's a few minutes late or leaves a dirty plate on the coffee table." He puts on the blinker to turn left onto Fanner Drive. "No wonder he sleeps on the couch half the time."

"That's not fair! You aren't ever home, so you don't get to take sides." The sound of the

blinker echoes in the silence. "I've been all alone ever since you left for college. Even when you are here, you're just with Heather or at work." My face starts to get hot, and I blink, trying to hold back tears. "And you get to go back to college again in a few weeks. You don't ever have to deal with them."

Trey turns right in front of another car, my stomach swinging with the motion. He speeds down Fanner Road, almost hitting our neighbor's mailbox. Pulling in our driveway, he presses the garage door opener and jumps out of the car. I start to cry and refuse to get out. Trey looks back at me.

He gets back in and slams the door. Neither of us says anything. Gripping the steering wheel, his knuckles are turning white. He looks over at me. "Steph, I'm sorry. I don't know what—"

"It's just that—" I bite my nails and don't look up.

"I know. It doesn't seem fair." He chews on his bottom lip and stares at his hands. "It *isn't* fair." He turns the key in the ignition. He puts a CD in, Favorite Oldies written in messy Sharpie on the top. He backs out of the driveway as the first song starts. Speeding down Fanner Road, he rolls down all the windows. I hang my hand out the window, trying not to let time catch up with us.

★ E.R.



No RIDERS / photograph / *Emily Latham*

Empty Rocking Chair

Daddy paces the gray linoleum.
He waits for my mother's return,
holding back his burning tears.
He calls for my sister and me, sits us down:
"Girls, the baby couldn't make it."
I jump at the sound of the garage door.
Mama appears behind the glass window,
looking drained of color and life, much older than before.
She pulls her hair back out of her face and comes inside,
holding two McDonald's happy meals—
only she would remember "her girls"
on such a dire day, and yet, she's smiling.
I run to give her the only thing I know might help—
a big "bear" hug!
I want to escape.
I climb the stairs, counting each step.
I need my room, my space of peace.
I am six years old and confused: the loss
of a baby sister—is this my fault?
I pass the baby's room,
stopping only to get a glimpse.
Tears float within the rims
of my swollen, red eyes.
An empty rocking chair stands still
in a mellow, yellow
room.

★ *Camille Garbo*

Grey

Grey is the shadow
that looms over my thoughts
like indecision.
Grey screams
without making a sound.
Melancholy grey
rolls in anger
like clouds before the storm.
These clouds cause great anxiety
and much distress.
Grey is all my regrets
and anger stored in a box
opened in the midst of uneasiness.

★ *Andrew Kennedy*

Divorce

The rain patters on my fogged windshield,
the gray clouds above weighted
by the heavy darkness they encompass.
Their frigid tears, falling, seem to jump
as they are burst open by the landing.
Their broken pieces scatter,
never to return to the original form
that was once bound together
by ties of nature.
My life is that crystal droplet
that has just been shattered.

★ Elizabeth Walker

Climbing

The devil is beating his wife.
Her tears pelt the leaves,
lit-up and neon from the sun
that reaches between the raindrops.
I look up into this magnolia,
my dark green teepee,
shaded haven,
sheltering me from the violent
storm outside,
bellowing,
smothering my ears.

I am reaching between the weak branches
for the strong ones,
my palms slipping on the soft wood.
A crack of thunder
makes the sun shine harder
and the rain fall faster.
Climbing slower,
I am not afraid.
I don't even pray that the devil
will stop.

★ Mallory Bass



GIANTS / photograph / Jeremy Smith

The devil is
beating his wife.





FAITH LIKE A CHILD / oil / Lauren Wakefield



Breathing

IT WAS A LAZY, JEANS CUT-OFFS SUNDAY. We did not go to church that day, but I remember being in the kitchen before lunch, reciting the Lord's Prayer (a prayer we always prayed to compensate for not going to church), and hearing a car door close. My mom quietly rose up out of her seat and went to her room, holding her face in her hands. My seven-year-old brother looked at me in question, and I abruptly halted the prayer and looked up to see Dad at the door. It had been three days since my dad went to visit my grandmother. He almost never visits her, and he never takes so many clothes when he goes anywhere. Without a word, he walked to his room. I carefully tiptoed a safe distance behind him, leaving my brother behind. Down the straight, narrow hall, past the familiarity of my room, his dark room was waiting and unwelcoming.

I plopped down on his neatly made bed, settled myself on my back, and watched him as he thumbed through clothes and opened suitcases. I grew disinterested and he didn't seem like he was in a mood to notice me—so I surveyed the shiny smooth wood walls, the apple-colored rug, and anything else that caught my eyes. As I was staring at the particles hanging in the air, highlighted by the sheer, warm daylight, the high-pitched rattle of clothes hangers

Mallory Bass



and metal rods from the closet broke the silence. He emptied his closets, and they now stared at me like empty eye sockets.

Out of breath, my dad abruptly sank parallel to me on his bed. His deep breathing eased my worried mind. I felt like the still air was waiting for me to say something, and a forced question formed in my mind. It was a useless question, even though the hope of togetherness still clearly lingered in my mind like the particles in the air.

In a reassuring voice, my mother had already told me they were not getting a divorce. I had felt comforted by her answer, but I resented her for censoring the truth.

He and I were stationary, looking straight up at the spinning fan. As the muted minutes passed, I strived to keep up with my dad's breathing. I tried to breathe at the same time and just as long as he did. I would say to myself, "Okay, after the next exhale I'm going to ask him." Then I lost track of the breathing and I blurted out clumsily: "Are y'all getting a divorce?"

Deep from his chest, he let out a long sigh. I impatiently assumed that was all that he was going to tell me, so I gave up on an answer. I felt childish and stupid because I knew the answer. I just wanted to hear it. Still, I hoped that he would come up with a comforting parent reaction; my father never told anything but the brutal truth.

After a couple more sighs, his low voice slowly answered my question and shocked my hopes.

"I'm afraid so."

As I watched it, the fan seemed to pick up his words and spin them around the room, echoing the truth to every dark corner. I felt the bed's waves under me as my dad got up and walked out without a word. I was left with only the sound and rhythm of my own breathing.

★ M.D.

Fading Grace

I fear that with age, the sounds of my youth will fade:
 the metallic dripping of my grandmother's sink
 into the feared silence of an empty apartment;
 the scratchy static of the radio in my high school
 boyfriend's truck into fierce goodbyes;
 buzzing wasps on the barn ceiling in the humid
 summer's air at my father's family reunion
 into gentle winds at a church cemetery;
 silly secrets whispered between friends
 in study hall over boys into niceties
 about kids and husbands at the supermarket;
 taunting by my sister in the backseat of the
 station wagon into settled maturity;
 rapture of youth into quiet submission.

★ Emily Ragland

...the scratchy static of the radio
 in my high school boyfriend's
 truck into fierce goodbyes...

...like the hidden, reflecting tears of my training wheel days...

Rain to laughter

After Kevin Young's "Song of Smoke"

To hear you laugh into the night
with your red-faced voice
is to watch a thunderstorm rage.
The ha-haha-hahaha of your explosion
is lightning jolting the earth—
the electricity of a black-red sky
burning till the world is golden—
you soak me with your frozen raindrops
and for forever I shiver.
No longer an innocent stranger,
I could never hide from your heat.
You keep me frightened all night like a nightmare.
Out of joy you cry;
navy clouds burst open and beat the trees.
You leave me only a puddle.

★ Holly Hosford

Daddy

I want to live in your palace.
I'll miss you.
I see you as our tears fall,
your face now just a reflection in the red wood,
your brain a thunderstorm, tangled in confusion.
Your teeth are green, covered in greed,
and your once starlight eyes droop with betrayal.

Never again your "Daddy's Girl."

Fireflies and honeysuckles represent my paradise days.
Those days had colors of red and rainbows.
Now they are stone gray,
like the hidden, reflecting tears
of my training wheel days,
the touch of your breath on my lips
before my goodnight kiss.
Goodbye, Daddy.

★ Carley Baker



WONDER / photograph / Caroline Blevins

Nightfall

Blindfolded by darkness,
I leave my black and white flip flops
on the dimly lit deck.

Waves crash against the shore
like a mother wiping smudged
eyeliner off her daughter's swollen eyes.

I reach out in darkness,
the calling waves my only guide,
shells, crabs, unseen moving life beneath my feet.

Blinded by what I cannot see, I stop,
let wave, and light, and sand speak to me.
I touch the unseen of nightfall.

★ *Britney Meeks*



Destin Baby

Sand trapped in every inch
of my swimsuit's
sparkled, pink ruffles
around my protruding baby belly,
I jump around slimy, puke-green
globes of weeds grown
on the bottom of the sea.
Mom carries the overflowing plastic
toy bag, dropping the little green
square castle molds
onto the scalding brown wood
of the boardwalk.

I never liked to make
detailed sandcastles.
They are boring.

I want to be buried,
head poked out,
sweating with the sun,
my body snug
and compacted by salt crystals,

cooled from the ground beneath.
Instead, the too-orange inflation
circles my waist
and I dare to float
in what seems to me
an immense bathtub.

New skin gleaming
on the top of his head,
still deep dark brown hair surrounding it,
my youthful daddy steps
into the water ankle high,
one eye attached to me, the other squinting
into the antiquated video camera,
following my every kick and splash
until I cry because sand itches
in my pink ruffles.

★ *Mary Crosby Turner*

I want to be buried, head poked out,
sweating with the sun,...

Saturday Ashes

Saturday night during the summer,
we drive out to the old graveyard,
five of us stuffed in Stewart's truck.
The open windows let honeysuckle-scented wind
toss up our hair with harmless anger.
We turn off the headlights once we reach
the gravel road, pebbles crunching underneath the tires.
We stumble through the cemetery, laughing
at jokes that will not make sense tomorrow.
We sit on the ground in the old section, stones
with dates from the Civil War crumbling back into dirt.
We drink whiskey and smoke cigarettes
that make our eyes water and our throats burn—
we haven't quite mastered the art of looking suave.
Blowing smoke into the air,
flicking the ashes on the unmowed grass,
we dare time to touch us,
to turn us too into ashes,
to bring us closer to the grave.

★ *Emily Ragland*

HAND IN HAND / tempera / Jessie Stribling



