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*The Bluegrass Accolade is a project of the Literary Arts Subcommittee of the Bluegrass Community and Technical College’s Arts on Campus Committee. Our thanks go out to all who helped make this project possible, including the writers, poets, and artists who contributed their work, and the committee members who contributed their time and effort to the production of this second issue.*

2008-2009 Arts on Campus Literary Arts Subcommittee

**Chair:** Maureen Cropper  **Members:** Joe Anthony, Charles Bagley, Melinda Baker, Rae Ann Gill, James B. Goode, Tammy Ramsey, and Angie Warne
TIFFANY AVERY

My Grandmother

13 kids; All her own,
The lines on her face for years have shown.
Hundreds of tears,
Were shed through the years;
But her eyes were dry,
No reason to cry.
13 kids; all her own,
The lines on her face for years have shown.
Hundreds of falls,
Into hundreds of walls,
She continued to scold,
Yet continued to hold.
13 kids; all her own,
The lines on her face for years have shown.
Hundreds of people in disbelief,
But through her kids she found relief,
Mother; her greatest accomplishment,
Her kids were God sent.
13 kids; all her own,
Thank her; now that they are grown.
Nothing is more ungrammatical than a woman in love; even an English scholar starts to sound mentally deficient. I listen to myself, cooing at my cats: “Oh, oo’s dest a pwecious, isn’t oo? Oh, dest wook at de itty bitty kitty, him’s dest so kewt!” I hate myself but can’t shut up.

Or look at any group of otherwise reasonable adult human beings in the presence of a baby; not one of them will be speaking the king’s good English. “Oh, just look at dem wittle feetsies. I’m going to eat dem feetsies up. Num, num, num. Oh, look at dat belly. I’m going to—”

Well, you get the idea; it’s too painful to elaborate further.

Not convinced? Well, look at how I talk to you. “My preciousest, I love you muches, my little cabbage, I love you t----h-----i------s much;” What the hell does that even mean? Why is it anyone in love cannot follow the rules of the language we’ve all agreed upon? Latin is not the language of love, nor flowers; Hallmark can’t touch this. Sheer idiot babbling is the dialect of choice. Oh well; nothing else to say except i loves you and i misses you my beautifullest, darlingest man;
I must be in love because

this is pure nonsense
this is lovetalk, my dear

DARRIS BATES

Pan

Since We lay together
i’ve not been the same
as though i’ve lost some virginity so obscure
i can’t even name it

Your hands have scraped my nerve endings raw
and since You breathed in my ear
i’ve been able to hear crickets mating
two towns over
my eyes that fell on You
stay dazzled with sun-spots
and my shoulder-blades where You caressed them
are sprouting wings
You kissed my forehead and now
i can’t stop thinking
and since You lay on me
i can feel each drop of blood
cascading through my body
and i am aware of each cell’s division
and death

i guess this is what it means
to be loved by a god
Your Wings

You have your back turned to me, though not in anger. You have left me behind for some secret dream world. You are as you always are this time of night, When your desires have been feed, your obligations met, Lips just slightly parted, breath slow and melodic, My god.

Your cashew cream skin, radiates warmth, It sinks in through me like sunlight coming Through the clouds. It is taunt over Scapulas, they are remnants of purity used up in another life.

I’ve seen you like this before Escaping from the undertow Fighting the current Feet surface first Dripping of suds, and bubbles. Your head is heavy Reluctant to come up for air.

Are you back now? Or are those mumbles Real words in another place? It’s ok either way, I’m willing to wait.
DON BOES

Mute Zoo

My advice, like I know anything,
is to dedicate the entire day to the gallery.

Regard the clay bull from Peru
and the jade serpent from China

and the recumbent hippo
from the Middle Kingdom—

a mute and motionless zoo,
older and wiser than you.

DON BOES

Critter Control

My first kiss was like finding an animal
I did not recognize. Subsequent kisses
were raccoons frolicking in the driveway,

like me skittering from paycheck to paycheck
and pretending to stay honest. Possums
appeared on the garage roof. Muddy footprints

criss-crossed my shiny windshield. One kiss,
identified by staring through binoculars
I maintain for that particular purpose, was a 3-legged cat.
Equatorial Blues

An equatorial sun scalds each square inch of saline. Time, Darwin knew, is in abeyance in a place where the North Star and the Southern Cross share the night sky. Those who naturally select these islands as home are as they must be. Change unfolds, in insulated calm, beneath the surface.

Among myriad intruders, we cruise for primal scenes and adaptive signs, diaphragms suspended. With enigmatic lapis webbing and a peculiarly owlish expression, boobies congregate on the slender atolls. Beneath clouded aqueous layers reflecting cerulean and gold, mirages coalesce.

There, abrasive sharkskin naps inches above undulating sand, still but for half-moons pulsing behind lidless eyes. Dusky triangulate wings create fleeting shadows, gliding on unknown currents to anonymous destinations. A chiseled carapace over elephantine tortoiseshell slippers performs a vast weightless arabesque.

Distant thunder attracts our attention, sonorous but perplexing in light of cloudless horizons. We have no land-based sonar to locate the source of this deafening boom, no reference point. But a tiny knowing smile from Jorge, ladies man and Galapagos naturalist, hints of a secret about to be revealed.

Watch, he says, with a generous gesture toward the lagoon’s far side. There, a sapphire-shod flock of hundreds, in unison flight over the glassy surface, wheels upward in dive preparation. In descent, a volley of beaks penetrates the deceptively soft surface and detonates with precise percussion, kettle drums and cannon fire.

Water roils as the buoyant flock surfaces en masse, dinner’s silvery silhouettes delicately but quickly dispatched. The pursuit of the evening’s repast is repeated with deafening abandon according to the menu’s underwater route. Displaced, fathoms of spray arc and plummet as the birds dive and break fast.
The sun slips into its watery cradle, rocking radiant crimson across pacific courses. For the flock, after dawn and before dusk, each meal’s roar is ignored. But their unexplainable synergy and exquisite synchronicity is a wonder to be savored, in an archipelago mood, when landlocked and sun-starved by the northern latitude’s long nights.
MICHELLE BURNSIDE

Dance of the Firefly

Light, Sound
Darkness all around
Flash, Bright in the dead of night
Something right in my eye
Oh the blink of a firefly
I was in another dream.

Back in Kentucky on winged horse high
Alone as the grass turned to ash
Green fields scorched in the sun
Tobacco stained farmers clutched the cracked clay

I was the revelation and the solitude
Flying like heartfelt words
Longing like army wives
Destitute like the bastard world

My sweaty brow on your chest
Violent and blackened
Mommy shook me awake

I fell back into the sheets
And waited for the late train
To lull me back to that
Familiar dark life.
KATHRYN COMBS

Untitled

sunrays shine down on the peak of an ocean wave
across the waters over a many seaman’s grave
only a few shall travel to the creatures of the deep
leaving the rest behind for the tide to keep
it’s lingering light carried to the shores at last
until on a new wave they may again be cast
DARNELL CUNNINGHAM

For the Measure of Your Love

For all the things you cannot see...........

   And all the things you have not felt..............

   And all the dreams you dared not hope...............I

I hold the vision of all we can be...........

   Our love shines brighter than Orion’s belt.........

   And brings with it the strength to cope...................

In you I find my life renewed...............

   And all of passions fires roaring..............

   My God blessed chance for love unending..........

In love with you my heart’s subdued........

   My soul with wings of Angels soaring..............

   The Spirit knows the love song sending..............

And so we choose to live............. For the measure of your love

   And to love you.............

   Forever
Regal

beak held high
luminous
royal blue
iridescent
everald green
dazzling
purple ears gleam
metallic
sitting as a king
looking you in the eye
a Sparkling
Violet-Ear
humming bird queen.
Energy

Energy,
sun spangled light
I see, thick rays
zooming out
of a centered sun.

Blocked
from view
by shadowed
black,
broad brushstrokes
paint
mysterious shapes,
trees splashed
with fire.

Red
streams
across the earth,
fish
swimming
towards the flame.
Could it be
mirrored
sky
upon a frozen plane?

Reflections
of the sun
rush diagonally,
riots of color
flash
rhythmically,
paint deeply smeared
and spread:
orange, green, yellow,  
and blue-gray

Power,  
bursting out  
hitting me there is no doubt  
energy streams  
penetrate.

Inside  
strong waves swell,  
pulsating  
with every breath,  
new life  
rushes in  
shooting strength  
into  
my soul.
ERIN FIFIELD

Mourn

It was the death of my brother that made me feel the first twinkling of mortality.
I was already a mother. I had already experienced life-risking situations.
But to have someone who entered this world the same passage as me, now gone….well,
It was back when I thought beginnings and endings were cold and final.

It was the death of my father that made me notice
It is the quality of time you spend with others that matter.
I cannot list the items he bought me, or the things of my childhood,
But I can recall scrambled egg and ham cooking just for me,
Cuddling safe on a fuzzy chest beneath a brown robe,
Watching his father eyes when he was explaining how to afford a home
With my new baby and boyfriend, wanting me to fly strong from the nest.

It is those five minute moments of connection that you remember most of a lifetime.

It was watching my mother as a new widow on her front porch
That told me to stay far, far away from these intimate relationships.
How could I dare risk loving her any deeper, knowing now that it was not forever?

It was watching my mother as a strong widow woman
That told me it was too late.
I was already deep in love, and the hurt felt later,
Did not matter compared to the connection today.

A little more time has taught me
Death is not the end,
Just like birth did not begin me.

My first witness to birth
In my sister-in-law’s bedroom
I was one of the kindergarteners crowded around the bed,
Was just as joyful as
My first witness to death,
In a hospital room
Saying goodnight dad, instead of goodbye.
ERIN FIFIELD

Friends

I draw your initials.
I look you up in random directories.
I was wondering if you had a life like mine.

Are we parallel or collision?
Are we neighbors or alone?
Similar or situational?

I guess that lunch that would sort it all out
is never to be shared.
I had a chance and was too young
and scared and self absorbed to recognize it.
You had a chance and chose no.

Some kind of ritual has to purge us.
I’ve tried burnings and incentives and newly-formed habits,
burials, renewals, recipes, and poetry,
candles, donations, acceptance, anger,
regret, guilt, labeling, and denial.

It is not working.
JOHANNA FLYNN

Maze of Sorrow

It was snowy today.
I couldn’t find my way.
Throughout the maze of drives,
I told myself not to cry.

I had been here once before,
Since you were taken from my core.
That day was sunny and new,
And the marker wasn’t set for you.

Today I finally found the stone,
With both your names aglow.
I brushed the snow aside,
And allowed myself to cry.

I dropped to my knees,
Below the massive tree.
And let my sorrow take me in,
I didn’t know where to begin.

I had so much to say,
For we spent together only one day.
My heart had let you go,
I miss you more than you can know.

I left your resting place today,
Finally finding my way.
I can feel your heavenly love,
Both my tiny angels above.
I know you are probably thinking that is the biggest load of manure that you have ever heard,
and believe me, I wish it were (*eye roll*).

Lets put it this way.. 
everything that Im dealing with makes me want to go prelaw.
It is about five until 12am I guess ...
and I currently have a temperature of 100.3.
Now, I dont know how that happened, but I cant get warm.
I have a poor immune system due to having pneumonia as a baby (long story).
Dont know what I have ... but it feels gross ... leave it at that.
   a lot has been going on here,
   family problems and all that
which unfortunately I am stuck in the middle of,
   along with my husband and our son.
   It would take me all night to fill you in,
   but lets put it this way ...
   the last couple of weeks or so ...
   my whole world was turned upside down ...
my mother is missing... I have no clue where she is...
Unfortunately, I dont think I can hold my head up long enough to fill you in
   I know I have missed a hell of a lot
know that if I miss tomorrow being sick that wont help either
Look, I think youre an awesome teacher,
   and I would love to explain all this in person,
   but I refuse to be responsible for getting anyone sick.
   Thanks for understanding ...
   but right now I have to get my son out of my room.
   The last thing I want is a sick baby
   as they are no fun to handle.
   As for the drama that is going on ...
I have cut off every last person that has been the cause of it...
The Dog Ate My Paper

“It’s Friday
and we’re stitching the paper together
but no one has a disk
or it’s in some far flung format
indecipherable
to anyone but aliens
it’s the new
the-dog-ate-my-paper
except this dog has
hundreds of heads
and thousands of sharp teeth
files have disappeared
they’ve been corrupted
raging venereal viruses
for which there is no known cure
have launched unprovoked attacks
there’s no safe intercourse anywhere
I e-mailed it to myself
but I don’t know where it went
It was there last night
but while I was sleeping
something got in my backpack
and slimed the files
I saved it
on the school computer hard drive
but the geeks removed
all unnecessary files
over the weekend
they shrugged their shoulders
when I ask what they thought we were going to do today
One makes a knitting gesture with his hands
   “They’re going to eat you alive
      When you transfer,”
      I say in disgust.

   They stare straight ahead
   their faces a zombie, ashen gray
   lit by the purple, tinted glow
      Of their monitors
   “Have a great Thanksgiving,”
      I say
      Sarcastically
   and promptly leave the room.
   “You too,” I hear a timid voice say
as I retreat to my office and close the door.
PRISCILLA HOWARD

Roadside Boom

We were out on patrol in our humvee
A couple of soldier buddies, the captain, and me
We were on our way back when we got hit
A roadside bomb killed Larry, right were he sit

Joe served with me through Desert Storm
The blast took his left arm
I got to the captain and pulled him out
But, there were burns there’ll be scares, no doubt

They told me I was lucky and that I’d be fine
But, I re-live that day over and over in my mind
I thought it’d be different once I got home
But it seems like now there’s no place I belong

I don’t eat and I can’t sleep
And jobs I just can’t seem to keep
My wife says I’m not the man that I use to be
She says she’s taking the kids and leaving me

Now I’m living in shelters or out on the streets
And if it wasn’t for the food lines well I couldn’t eat
They tell me I’m lucky and I’ll be fine
But, I’m re-living that day over and over in my mind
BILINDA MILUM

Teach Me

Teach me how to love unconditionally.
Use small words so I will understand.
Commit to unspoken gestures and seal up old wounds.
Show me the world through someone else’s eyes; I once thought I always did.
I remain unsure of my commitment to life.
When you awaken to soft sunlight shining through slits of window blinds and know you are home,
Is there always comfort in that?
Tell me how I should move,
  Lift my arms and legs in a graceful manner so I do not stumble on my own shortcomings.
You wind through my veins...how do I remove you?
Ripping your presence from my heart,
  I cannot breathe.
I see you very small and distant through broken hearts and crushed egos and suddenly I am the one accused.
I have no pedestal; you made sure of that long ago.
Bring me back to the place I once loved and remove the broken glass from my hands.
I cannot take the lead.
ASHLEY NICOLE MIRACLE

If Only To Hold You

Desperate in this futile attempt,
I reach out for a hand to grab,
yet there is none.

When we were in love,
you were there for every step,
when I feared I would fall.

I would lay awake at night,
anticipating your arrival home,
if only to hold you.

You would come in so quietly,
trying not to stir me,
yet you had already stirred my heart.

When you had a tough day,
and you did not want to talk,
I was there with a warm embrace.

Turning to greet you,
I always had a smile on my face,
if only to hold you.

During the war,
when you had to work harder,
I would wait up to wash your feet.

We were together,
through so much of life’s pain,
and we’d always make it through.

Yet now as i stand here,
it does not seem real to me,
after 51 years of marriage...
You had to leave,
standing at this stone of yours,
I long...
if only to hold you...one last time.
It is almost midnight and the
dishes are draining.
The water seeps through a crack
unseen
and falls into
some other place
some darker place.
I wish for a cigarette
even though I have never smoked
outside my best
friend’s tree house
the summer I turned twelve.
The television keeps screaming
voices in a foreign tongue,
words
disconnected
redrawn
pressed together in a different way.
My mother snores,
a drunken, distant sound,
and my lip curls up
in a way that reminds me of my
father.
I wonder when I became so
jaded
tired
so very much unlike my other self.
My better side of the mirror
self.
I have lost a bit of youth, serenity,
childhood,
and gained too much
sarcasm, cynicism,
depravity.

Ashley Mullins

Darker Place
I have fallen through the cracks and
hope
has fallen with me.
Untitled

Going blind in her left eye,
Always there if I laugh or I cry.
A little more grayier than she was last year,
But still walking behind me very near.
She don’t chase the neighbor’s cat like she did before,
Her small short legs are getting crippled and sore.
After work I drive in and see,
Out the window watching for me.
Forever together and always around,
I wish I was half the person my dog thinks I am.
The little boys make up the man. A collection of little boys nestled together and masked to the world as an individual man. Russian Dolls situated one in another, each new incarnation rising out of the collective to claim the seat of power like a Roman autocrat, shouting out to the world I am "The Man." Each ascending self, conceiving of their self, as an immortal individual. Foolish little selves thinking that they will rule forever. Foolish little selves believing they are "The Man."

How do I remember who I am? Can one peel back the layers of one’s selves and penetrate to the core? Will I only find a million little pieces that people will revile as false and misleading? Is it just one missing piece somehow stuffed in the pocket of one of my selves that can make me whole? Can I ever be whole, or, is that just an illusion? Do we only become complete in death, our last breath, the author’s signature? Is the seeking of completeness a fool’s errand?

I’m sure this task requires a sense of humor because the surgeon of the soul exposes foolish personas; but mocking laughter would not be the worst effect, insecurities would be exposed, fears confronted, and hatred examined. My life has been violent. My life has been peaceful. My life has been boring. Do I have the courage to travel down the road that leads to the abyss? Can I stomach the dark tea time of the soul?

However foolish I have been in the past, my future self, now, now, now, now, now, recognizes the (im)possibility of truth(s). We re-member and re-cognize the past. The act of remembering reconstructs the past. The viewer gives meaning to the view. I remember what I remember.
today and will remember what I remember tomorrow. No one can expect these memories to remain the same. I am but an archivist of the self, pulling traces out of my clogged brain, seeking narrative sense, pulling fragments together, a collage of the selves represented as a self. Restor(y)ing the self.

This will be a horror story. No. This will be a bildungsroman. No. This will be a romance. No. This will be a comedy. No. Can we label today what may change tomorrow? No. This will be a true story? No. Yes. Maybe. Depending on what you conceive of as the truth. Some may even re-cognize themselves in what I write, but I warn you it is not you I write about, although, you might ask why it is I am writing about you? You might ask what is in you that you recognize in my story? You bring your own story to my tale in completing it anew for you. My story becomes our story when you read it, like love’s warm embrace, each union is unique. A fiction full of lovers, come feel my key stroke, aching to unite with you and create new meanings.

This will not be a true story. Yes! No! Maybe? This will be a true story. Yes! No! Maybe? What has always amazed me the most in life is not that so many people remember the same event/moment differently. No, that seems obvious to my 21st Century Mind, what amazes, nay, scares me, is how so many people, and societies, are able to erase the distinctive and memorable recognition that memories are but constructs of the moment and will change again and again and again. This is the violence we do to ourselves, a violence as deep and painful as our erasure of the fact that one day we will not exist. We are past imperfect.

So, what will follow is the absolute truth...
CHRISTOPHER ALLEN EINHAUS

Even Snow Dies

She still could not believe it. It was as if she had returned to childhood and it was her first snowfall. Picturing herself outside dancing upon the bare ground as the white crystals slowly drifted down. Lily's arms were outstretched and her mouth wide open hoping to catch a snowflake upon her awaiting tongue.

"Lily, don't you stay out too long. You forgot to put your coat on, dear." her mother reminded her.

"Don't worry. I won't freeze to death." she replied.

Still dancing in circles, she thought about her reply. What if she were to let the flakes cover her body up and when she did not answer, her mother would only find a mound of snow.

She wondered what it would feel like to become frozen.

"Are you going to stand with the freezer open all day?" her boyfriend asked.

Suddenly Lily returned to the harsh reality. Realizing that the cold and snowflakes were really due to her head being in the freezer getting ice cubes because the ice maker was broken again.

"What...no I was just thinking. Did you ever try to catch snowflakes on your tongue?"

"No, why? I was much too busy studying."
“Even when you were small enough to run around the yard in bare feet?”

“I never did play that much outside. The other kids around the neighborhood did though. I just watched from inside when I happened to look up from my books.”

“You missed out on all the fun.”

“Fun? Fun doesn’t keep us here in this apartment and our stomachs fed.”

With that being said, Jack left the kitchen. A smile returned to Lily’s face as she was thinking of all the fun she used to have when she was a child. Again her happiness was disturbed by her boyfriend, as she could not let him think he was always right.

“You know there is more to life than money,” she said, coming into the room trying not to smile because she knew he didn’t like it when she held her own in discussions.

“Not really. Money makes the world go ’round.”

She was wishing that she could return to the freezer episode because right now being buried in a mound of snow seemed better than living with a materialistic jerk who always knew the correct answer to everything. What led her to be put in this position of pseudo-slavery?

Trying to live up to her family’s expectations caused her to become wrapped up in Jack and his apparent security blanket. His lifestyle, though comforting, was sometimes like a stranglehold.

Suddenly something else felt very comforting: a gentle breeze that had a chill to it.
She swore that a single snowflake danced before her eyes. She blinked twice and the only thing she saw was Jack giving her a quizzical look. Then it hit her that she had forgotten to get any ice for her drink. Nothing like the real world to be a distraction to your present thoughts. So she drank it warm, knowing that right now returning to the freezer would only raise too many suspicions from Jack. She did not want to give him the satisfaction of knowing that she had forgotten something again, and besides, there would be time later for a break from the warm comfort. She had sat down next to him but as usual he did not notice her presence. He continued watching the business snooze like he did every night. Dutifully she sat beside him but could not focus on the numbers and facts that flashed upon the screen. Their hands were only inches apart but they might as well have been miles apart.

Before she knew it she was awakened by the distant sound of beeping. Slowly her eyes crept open. Half expecting to have a car behind her beeping because the light had changed to green, she realized it was only Jack's alarm. Then she focused on the now silent TV. Have you ever looked at the screen when the TV is not on? Life is reflected like in a film negative, everything is black. She had fallen asleep on the couch and more importantly he had left her there, alone and probably without a kiss goodnight. Now molded in the shape of the way she was last night, she stretched out. She was barely sitting upright when the TV turned on. He plopped down next to her
with toast in his mouth mumbling good morning, still no kiss or anything. She tried standing but pins and needles was all she got in return so she returned to her comfortable spot. She turned to say "Good morning" but he was already gone with a "See you after work" as he went out the door, leaving crumbs on the couch. Now she was left alone with the babbling TV which she turned off so she could return to dreamland.

This time there was snow but she felt different. Instead of being right outside her house, she was in a whispering forest alone, but with a feeling that she was being watched. The full moon above her was shining down brightly upon the snow covered landscape. It was almost blinding and her shadow cast a distance away from her. She didn’t know why her shadow seemed so important but it felt like it had something to do with the person watching her.

Even though she was vulnerable and confused in the middle of an unknown place, she felt alive and free to roam around this playground. She didn’t feel the cold but could see her breath as it ascended towards the sky. As she concentrated on watching her breath she didn’t notice the pack of wolves surrounding her, then her breath became part of a larger cloud and she feared to look around her. The wolves’ eyes did not glow red, but were really a golden yellow as they watched her. As she was keeping an eye on the wolves, the moon was being obscured by a winged creature that she swore was going to enshroud her. At the last moment, it flew past her and into the forest.
She followed it as far into the trees as the woods would allow for the trees, that just moments before had been inviting and offered protection from the surrounding darkness now had stretched out their limbs and blocked her from going deeper into the forest. That is when Lily saw a pair of red eyes burning in the shadows and now the eyes of the wolves turned red. It all sent shivers down her spine but that was just a defensive reaction because she really felt a sense of arousal as the burning eyes began to come closer. Just as a shape vaguely started forming, she awakened.

She had just enough time to fix dinner before Jack came home. Dreaming was the only way she got released from this prison besides boring corporate dinners and stuffy social parties.

Maybe she didn’t have a right to complain. It wasn’t as if Jack kept her locked inside a rusty cage or smacked her around, but emotionally it felt the same - isolation from her feelings and emotions, and a denial of her sense of freedom. Recently she had begun thinking of why she really stayed with him. He doesn’t need her. Jack is so involved with making money that her presence is really as a glorified maid. Someone to keep the apartment respectable and someone to make dinner. Someone to show off to his business buddies and someone to have sex with, not love just sex.

Ever since she started having these dreams Lily felt somewhat empowered, deep inside but slowly coming to the surface. Maybe she would tell Jack the truth and leave him. Just walk out one evening when he comes home from work, without
making his dinner or washing his clothes. She could picture his shocked expression slowly being replaced with anger. How could she do this to him, after all that he has done for her? What was she thinking? She couldn't survive without him...or could she? She dismissed these thoughts and concentrated on dinner.

Tonight's menu was steak and potatoes, nothing fancy but it was his favorite. He never tried new foods, only stuck with what he was familiar with. That's it-her life was too familiar!

When he came through the door, he didn't even do the "Hi honey, I'm home!" routine.

Only a simple "Hello," quick hug and "What's for dinner?" He started droning on about his day.

There went the facts and numbers floating pointlessly through space in between bites of meat. She nodded and feigned interest and then she noticed it was getting colder. Her breath fogged up her glass as she took a sip of wine. This wine definitely had an earthy aftertaste but tonight tasted more like copper. Suddenly her eyes grew wide as the room was replaced with a whispering forest that silenced his voice. The shock of sitting at a table in the middle of snow soon wore off as Jack slowly disappeared and she was left sitting alone.

"What do you want?" She turned around looking for a body to the voice.

"I should be asking you that same question," she replied, knowing that it was
the winged creature she had briefly seen earlier.

"You summoned me from this cold wasteland to give you the power to live your dream."

"My dream...how do you know what my dream is?"

The voice was gone and the room reappeared. Jack was still talking and she was still nodding

"...that is why I am so glad that the day is over with." He realized that her focus was shifted away from him.

"You are not listening to me are you?"

At first she only stared at him, trying to push the dream away and return to the numbers, but it was hard. She could use Jack's question against him. Would he feel as small as she does? Lily just stared at him with scornful eyes until he looked down to scoop up another bite of food. Silence then pervaded the room from that uncomfortable moment.

"I don't feel well. Maybe I should go lay down." Lily said quietly. Not waiting for a response, she left Jack with the dirty dishes. Finally, she thought, I can find out what my dream is.

Her head lay gently down upon the fluffy pillow. No matter how hard she tried, her eyes would not relax enough to close. They kept focusing on the picture of Jack on the night stand. Horns seem to protrude from his yuppy head. Then she blinked and
the same boring Jack was there. Through the pillow she felt a deep vibration, not audible, just massaging her skin. The vibrations went in short bursts, as if speaking an unknown language. She sighed as her soul was being caressed by invisible fingers.

Her eyes opened, expecting to see Jack's picture staring blankly back at her but in its place was a tree-lined path. Darkness tried to invade from the edges but a light down the way seemed to push it away. The vibrations now entered into her ears.

"Lily, I have felt the pain in your heart and the hunger in your soul. Come away from the source of your affliction and let me heal you."

With these words her body arose from the Alstroemeria sheets and her bare feet floated a few inches from the floor. The path was indeed calling to her. With arms outstretched, she intrepidly stepped beyond the reality she knew. Accepting the long fingered hands that appeared just past her fingertips, she felt the vibrations again. Like a humming of a thousand humming birds. Her flesh felt like it was on fire and her soul felt alive. So she let the hands guide her toward the light at the end of the path as the darkness from the edges surrounded her.

"Lily, you can clean off the table now." Jack said as he opened the bedroom door.

But his demand went unheard as he noticed that she was not in the bed. She had come and lain down but the only thing left was her body's impression on the Alstroemeria sheets. Jack was left thinking, "What am I going to do?" He thought he heard her laughing in the distance.
Joshua Wayne Traylor comes out on the front porch with an adjustable Crescent wrench hidden up his right coat sleeve and cupped in the palm of his hand. He is dressed in a bright blue, jersey dress shirt, blue and white, checked, double-knit pants laced with a white patent-leather belt, white patent-leather shoes, argyle socks, and a gray straw hat turned down at the front brim. His black, plastic frame glasses sit upon the bridge of his nose magnifying his eyes, making them look like two large, black marbles. His eyes dart to the left and up the street toward where the last house in the row sits just under where the hill gets steep as a cow’s face and then to the right to where the row ends at the main highway.

No one is out at this time of the morning. The kids have already left for school. He watches them catch the school bus every morning from his perch beside the bedroom window. He watches the mothers of the little ones walk back up the street and disappear inside the houses.

Joshua moves quickly down the porch steps and toward a rectangular concrete lid that is flush with the ground surface next to the pavement at the edge of the street. He has done this before, but his heart still races as he bends over lifts the lid, and peers into the water meter box. He holds a miniature flashlight in the puckered “O” of his lips, plunges his hand into the
opening, and quickly turns off the water with the wheel valve. He grasps the Crescent wrench in his right hand and thrusts it into the depths and begins to twist the two brass nuts on either side of the meter. He frees the meter, flips it around to point in the opposite direction, tightens the nuts, and quickly replaces the lid. Then, he gingerly moves over to the rose bushes beside the porch and pretends to pick imaginary bugs from the leaves, checking with his magnified eyes to make sure no one has witnessed his act.

His son-in-law is the one who told him that if the meter is installed backwards, it won’t register. Bethel knows all kinds of tricks like this. He could teach a graduate class on ripping off the city government. Bethel’s favorite scheme is to drill and pour plain old table salt into electrical meter bases. He says, “By damn, that will slow it down to a speed that’s more in line with current financial circumstances.”

Joshua chuckles deep in his stomach muscles when he thinks of Bethel. Dadgummit! Ain’t he a smart boy? He thinks. Joshua has a real appreciation for what he calls “fox sense” and Bethel has the largest helping of that in all the Traylor family.

Joshua knows that it is just a matter of time before the city maintenance workers will be around to read the meter. They will report zero usage to the water department supervisor who will order them to come back down to the Traylor house and turn the meter back around.

Sure enough, at the end of the month, they come to the door and knock. Joshua waits until they have knocked over a dozen times before he grabs the aluminum walker he keeps
stowed in the hall closet. He messes up his hair, shuffles to the door, and pretends to be deaf.  


The maintenance man shuffles his feet in place. “Your water meter’s been tampered with!” He exclaims. “Do you know who might be doing it?”

Joshua places his little finger in his ear and shakes it vigorously, like he has an ear full of water. “What?” He says.

“Your water meter . . . turned around . . . who did it?” The maintenance man says. He gestures as if he is talking to someone who doesn’t speak English.

“The butler!” Joshua says. His voice has suddenly developed a tremor.

The men shake their heads and go back to their truck. They think he doesn’t understand. They feel sorry for him. They think he has Alzheimer’s. Joshua stands behind the living room curtains and sneers. They don’t know crap from apple butter, he thinks. The maintenance men tell the water system supervisor who calls James Archer, the city councilman in charge of the water system. “The Traylor water meter has been turned around again!” The supervisor tells him.
James has had enough. This is happening too often to suit him. The water department can’t afford to keep doing this. This ties up valuable manpower and there is way too much to be done to repair the old water system that is more important.

“You get the police officer to go with you to Joshua’s house and tell him to be at the city council meeting next Thursday at 7 p.m.,” James says to the water system supervisor. “I want him to answer my questions before the mayor and council, by golly!” He says.

Joshua lives in the house with Bethel and his daughter Linda. He has been with them for five years, since Shirfonia died in 1978. Linda has pretty much given up on telling Joshua what to do. She tells her female friends that Joshua is an old dog who can’t learn new tricks. As a matter of fact, he probably was hard to teach tricks when he was a young dog. “It’s almost as if he has a mind of his own!” She says. Linda knows that he is in cahoots with Bethel because they’ve always been thick as cold molasses.

Little Jim, the city policeman shows up at the Traylor front door the next day. He knocks on the weathered door with the back of his clenched fist. Linda comes to the door in her bathrobe and hair wrapped in a towel. She is embarrassed when she sees Little Jim. They dated during their freshman year in high school. It is always strange for Linda to meet old boyfriends who have had their hands on her unmentionables. Little Jim had a fair helping of that with Linda. She turns her head slightly to the right and looks just over the top of his right ear.
“Mornin’, Linda Sue!” He says. He switches and rolls a wooden toothpick from one side of his mouth to the other and gives her a kind of Elvis look.

“I’m sorry I look so awful this morning,” she says. “I just got out of the tub and was putting on my makeup.”

“You look just fine to me,” he says. He shifts his weight from one hip to the other as he looks directly at the opening in her robe revealing a good portion of her thigh.

“What can I do you for?” She asks.

“Well, it’s about Joshua and the water meter,” he says.

“What’s Joshua got to do with the water meter?” She re-tucks the towel with a twist and a flip.

“Well, James Archer thinks he is turning it around so it won’t register and wants him to come to the city council meeting next Thursday at 7 p.m.,” he explains.

“Well, I don’t know nothin’ about it,” she says. “But I will tell him and he’ll have to make up his mind about whether he wants to come.”

“I’m just the messenger, Linda Sue. All I can tell you is that James Archer is pretty damn mad and he asked me to come down here and so that’s what I have done.” He pushes his police hat back on his head.
“I know you’re just doing your job Little Jim. But you know how Joshua is. He sometimes is as stubborn as an oak stump!” She winks with her right eye.

Little Jim thanks her, crisply wheels around on his left heel, and returns to his cruiser.

Linda goes back into the house and into the kitchen. Joshua is sitting at the turquoise metal table in the kitchen drinking a cup of coffee.

“What did that little pipsqueak want?” He asks before Linda can say a word.

“Have you and Bethel been screwing with the water meter again?” She cuts directly to the chase.

Joshua takes a long time to answer. “Reckon it will rain?” He finally says.

Linda hates it when he does that. Anytime he doesn’t want to answer, he always asks a question that is totally unrelated to the conversation.

“No, it ain’t going to rain; there’s not a cloud in the sky; it is as blue as a sapphire out there!” She says. “Did you or did you not screw with the water meter?”

“I don’t remember,” he says.

“Well, you better start remembering because they want you at the city council meeting at 7 p.m. next Thursday,” she explains.
“Don’t get your panties in a wad,” he says. “I’ll go to the council meeting. It’ll be a good outing. I ain’t been up there to aggravate the city fathers in a while. Every now and then they need a good reaming from the voting citizens!”

Linda rolls her eyes to the ceiling, unwraps the towel, and begins to vigorously rub her hair as she walks away toward her bedroom.

The 1st Thursday of each month is the official time for the city council meeting in Snookie Ridge. The city hall is the center building in a row of six others along one side of Main Street. It is housed in the former coal company office and still has the double set of steps leading to the pay windows on the west side of the building. When the coal company sold all the non-mining buildings to people in the 1960s, they incorporated and, for the first time ever, had a democratically run city government with a real mayor and city council. But Snookie Ridge hasn’t exactly become a hotbed of politics. As a matter of fact, it is sometimes difficult to get enough people to run for the six seats on the council.

The last election was the most hotly contested. James Archer ran the first campaign in its history with posters, calling cards, and bumper stickers. At 25, he is the youngest member of city government in their fifteen-year history. He defeated one of the charter members of the council by just two votes. Now, Lula Stengal doesn’t speak to James Archer anymore. When he sees her at the post office, he always speaks and blows her a kiss. She invariably wipes her face all over with her handkerchief and screws her face up in disgust. James thinks Lula is tight. He
says she squeezes her money so tight that every dead president ends up with a permanent wave. After she leaves the post office lobby, the men who hang around there always have a good laugh with James Archer about Lula.

Thursday arrives with a bright, orange sun pushing up over the steep hills. Joshua spends most of the day whittling out a caged ball for Bethel. At about 6 p.m., Joshua puts on his best jersey and double-knit suit and sets off walking up the gentle hill toward city hall. Almost everyone he passes in their cars knows him. They honk their horns and wave. Some yell out “Hey! Skinny! How’s your hammer hanging?”

He waves at all of them. Most he doesn’t recognize. He has met a lot of people in his 85 years. He still has a spring in his step. He thinks he may be one of the last 85-year-old men on Earth who can keep three girlfriends satisfied—if you know what I mean. The city hall has a few cars parked in front. He goes up the steps, down the hall, and through the double oak swinging doors into the council chambers. There is one big table in the center of the room with ten chairs—a chair for each of the six council members—the mayor, city clerk, and one “victim,” as Joshua calls them. Metal, folding chairs line three sides of the room and are provided for all the rest. The direct witnesses to corruption and shenanigans, Joshua thinks.

Joshua takes a seat in one of the council chairs. He figures that he has as much right to sup at the table as they do. The mayor and city clerk emerge from the mayor’s office and give him a scowl. He leans back and makes himself comfortable. James Archer, the rest of the
council, and a few noble voting citizens have come into the room by this time. James’ eyes avoid Joshua’s. Joshua purposefully tries to make eye contact but every time he tilts and dips his head to look toward James’ face, James casts his glance to the ceiling or out the window.

The mayor brings his gavel down and says, “We’ll call the meeting to order. Anybody want to add something to this here agenda tonight?” No one says anything. They proceed with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and the financial report. Then the mayor glances at his agenda and says, “James Archer is next up with a water department item.” James Archer looks down at the stack of paper on the table in front of him and begins, “As you know, we’ve had a chronic problem at the Traylor house with the water meter being tampered with. I ask Joshua to come up here tonight to answer a few questions.” He finally turns his gaze toward Joshua.

“Joshua, do you have any idea who is turning your water meter around backwards?” He asks.

Joshua fiddles with the lapel on his bright blue polyester knit coat. “Now, James Archer, you know I ain’t got a nit’s notion as to who it might be. I been watching and watching and I ain’t seen nobody!”

James Archer pushes back from the table and turns toward Anlis Lee, the water system supervisor, who is seated next to the door. “Anlis, go get a new padlock and all the keys that we have to it,” he says.
Anlis gets up from the creaking metal chair and goes through the double swinging doors and into the hallway. Shortly, he comes back with a shiny new Master padlock with four keys and lays them on the table in front of James Archer. James takes his right hand and pushes the lock and all four keys toward Joshua.

“I want Anlis to take you home right now and lock off that water meter and I’m going to give you all the keys that there are to it in the whole doggone world. Then, if that water meter gets turned around, we’ll both know who did it, won’t we?” He says.

Joshua grins like an opossum inside but he doesn’t show it on his face. He and Anlis leave the city council meeting and get into the old city dump truck. They drive down to the Traylor house. Anlis locks the meter and gives the keys to Joshua. He tells him that he has to get back to the council meeting and leaves him standing on the porch. Joshua watches the truck pull onto the main highway and then looks down at the four keys cupped in the palm of his wrinkled hand.

“Well, finally!” He says. “We have a city father who has some sense. That James Archer has got to be the smartest man in the world!”

Linda comes out of the house and stands beside him. She puts her arm through the crook of his right arm.

“That James Archer is one more smart man!” Joshua tells her. “He just might be one of the smartest men in the world. Yes, by damn, he is probably is the smartest man I’ve ever met
and when I die, by God, I want him to preach my damn funeral. You just tell him I don’t want him to read anything from the Bible!” He winks at Linda as they turn to go inside the house.
The miserable-looking dog limped across our farm yard. At first glance, that was all I saw. Her ribs stood out, easily counted. She hadn’t been fed in a long time.

Mangy? Yes, she was that, too. She had rubbed all the hair off her tail and scratched most of the hair off several other spots. Her teats swung and moved with every step. Wasn’t that a sign that she recently had puppies? Well, there was no sign of any puppies now, just a lost mother dog who needed some human kindness.

I opened my door.

Later, I learned more of her story. I discovered that she had never experienced human kindness—only hurt had come from the humans she knew. Right from the time they got her as a puppy, her owners kept her locked in a small, fenced yard with a set of scrappy, fighting dogs. Then, when she became pregnant, the people chained her to a tree just outside of that yard. Sometimes they fed her and provided water. Sometimes they did not.

When her puppies came along, as soon as they were weaned, they were immediately taken away from her and sold. That happened over and over again.

When her owners were evicted, they shipped off their fighting dogs somewhere, but they made no provisions for the old mother dog. They never cared or considered how the sun
would beat down mercilessly on the dog they left behind, still chained up, left without food or water.

To survive, the dog slowly chewed through the metal chain, breaking several teeth in the process. Making her way into town, she approached several people. Some simply shooed her off their doorsteps. Others kicked her away.

She camped out near the campus McDonald’s for several weeks after she discovered that college kids would throw some of their fries and leftover burgers her way. One day, while zooming away from the carry-out window one of them hit the dog with his car.

That was the day she limped out of town and found our farmhouse. Despite all the bad things humans had done to her, when I opened my door and approached her for the first time, she wagged her tail. At the first touch of my hand, she raised her eyes and looked up at me with hope and unfailing love.

To me, it looked like she was thinking, “I hope you take me into your home. I hope you’ll feed me. I hope you’ll let me stay.” So I named her Hope.

Within a few days, Hope had favorites: a favorite sunny spot in the farmhouse kitchen, a favorite blanket to nap on, and a favorite kitten to lick and love like a puppy. Watching the old dog explore her new home and accept all the love her new “family” lavished on her reminded me of the following line from an old hymn: “Hearts unfold like flowers before thee,
opening to the sun above.” The melody comes from Beethoven’s Ninth symphony, but the words and name of the hymn tune came later, when it was named the “Hymn to Joy.”

Three years have passed since the day the dog found joy—-and I found Hope. Each day that old farm dog has returned love a hundred fold. She has become a self-appointed helper around the place. She has adopted orphan lambs and helped to raise them. She has been my companion especially when I work in the garden. Afterwards, she has always enjoyed an ice cube slipped into her water bowl with as much relish as I do while sipping iced tea.

The backseat is her throne during our trips to town. Yes, she always earns a burger at McDonald’s while we’re there (however, we’ve both cut out the fries). As I drive, if I begin humming the music to the “Hymn to Joy,” the dog cocks her ears and seems to be listening to her own, very special melody.

Back home on the farm, she may tear out of the car when she spots a deer or a rabbit, but she always slows down before she catches them. I gather she just enjoys the chase. When I whistle a few bars of Beethoven’s music from the “Hymn to Joy,” it always brings her back out of the woods.

Each Christmas, she has remained unfazed by a blizzard of wrapping paper, noisy toys and noisier grandchildren who are apt to hang all of their ribbons around her neck. Even wreathed with bright ribbons, there is no way to make her a pretty dog. She’s just an old farm
dog with broken teeth and a dangling tongue, but to me she is lovely. With or without the ribbons---she’s God’s gift to me---a shining example of trust, hope and love.
The old multi-colored tiles fell crashing onto the floor shattering to create a plumber’s mosaic. He sliced his blade through the drywall peeling it from the wooded studs. Everything had to be replaced. Ted Sanders had just purchased this fixer-upper at an estate auction roughly a year ago. During the walk through he could see the potential of this; two bedroom, one bath, finished basement, brick home hidden so quaintly in a prominent cul-de-sac. He just couldn’t pass up the opportunity to transform this house into a home. Ted was retired from the military and was never the settling type, so unmarried and childless this house was perfect for him and he had more than enough time and money to bury his loneliness and sorrows into the reconstruction of this lifeless structure. Ted worked hard on customizing the entire house making it personalized with artifacts from his travels around the world, a wrap around oak porch with an attached fish pond that had a trickling rock waterfall and flawless landscaping which included a grape vine for future winemaking. The bathroom was in the worst shape of any room but functional, so he saved his most challenging project for last. As he sanded down the walls he choked a little on the drywall dust. Ted decided it was time for a break so he took off his safety goggles and wiped them off across his tee shirt. He patted down his jeans to poof the dust out of them and slid his hands down each arm before walking through his clean house to the kitchen for a cool glass of ice water. As he braced himself against the bay window in
dining area, he gazed out onto his perfectly manicured lawn and watched as the humming birds buzzed up to their feeder to share a drink with him. The moment was sweet and relaxing, until all of a sudden he spotted it. “That damn cat!” He said out loud. Ted busted open the screen door and snapped, “You better not shit in my flower bed. Now get out of here.” He was waiving his arms and running after the tom cat. It ran away from Ted and scurried under a whole in the fence that connected his yard with the neighbor’s. The cat’s name was Claude Nabilous and it belonged to Mrs. Brinkley, an elderly widow and a pest. He had been to her once before about the cat and its business in his garden, but she just kind of chuckled and made excuses for her fluffy friend as she held it in her arms stroking its tummy. Ted didn’t try to meet his neighbors when he moved in because he didn’t care to know them. He was very private and self-sufficient, so he really didn’t feel that friends were necessary. The way he saw it, if he needed a cup of sugar he would just go to Harper’s Grocery Store and buy his own bag of sugar. The neighborhood stayed away from the grumpy veteran and blamed his temper and disposition on loneliness. Nevertheless, Mrs. Brinkley was reluctant in leaving him be. She was always approaching him in the back yard, flapping her jaws to him about nothing. Ted was sure she did it just to annoy him.

After his brief encounter with Claude, Ted went back into the bathroom and began to hammer the new drywall into place. He carefully cut out places in the drywall where plumbing was necessary. His whirl pool tub hadn’t been delivered yet, so there was a large hole revealing the foundation of the house. Every evening after his work, Ted placed a large plastic tarp across
the hole to block critters, moisture, heat, or anything else that could invade his quarters. It was getting late, so Ted decided to turn in for the night.

Early the next morning, Ted got up, got dressed, fixed a cup of coffee, and headed to the bathroom to begin work. He entered the unfinished room, stepped over his power tools and dodged the muddle only to find that his tarp was torn to shreds. His eyes traced the trail of plastic particles that led him to discover Claude lodged between plumbing and drywall barely breathing. Claude had been chasing a mouse and ended up in the piping. The porcelain handle slid off his fingers crashing to the ground in an explosion of hot coffee. Ted went over to Claude and as he extended his arms to try and wiggle the cat out, Claude let out an unfriendly growl. “Forget it,” Ted thought. Ted began to play out the scenario in his mind. He didn’t even like Claude anyways, and he wasn’t the one that put him there; Claude got himself stuck. So if he was to die… it really wouldn’t be his fault.

Ted’s tub was being delivered at noon, so he had four hours to finish patching up the holes in the walls (including the one Claude was caught in) clean up his mess, and then come up with some kind of alibi if anyone were to ask questions. With every scrape of plaster across the drywall, Ted’s heart pattered a little faster. He hated that cat, but was this going too far? As he was sanding the doorbell rang startling the sandpaper out of his grasp. “You order a tub?” asked a large man with a northern accent in a Lowe’s uniform. His name was stitched into his shirt, Larry. “Yes, yes I did. Right this way,” Ted answered and the man signaled his partners to come along. Ted showed the men where the tub was to be placed. His hands shook and his
voice quivered as he directed them in what to do. “You nervous pal,” Larry asked. “Nope. Just excited,” Ted replied. The men went out to the truck, unloaded the tub and carefully maneuvered it through the house, down the narrow hallway, and into the bathroom. The men began to lower the tub into place when one of them lost his grip and a corner of the tub busted into the newly patch drywall slightly fracturing a water pipe. “Shit,” Ted exclaimed. The men began to apologize and offer solutions, but what they didn’t know was that Ted wasn’t so much worried about his wall as he was his secret. “It’s fine. I’ll patch it up later.” Ted was unaware of the damage to the pipe. About an hour later the installation was finished completing the bathroom. Now all Ted had left to do was patch a whole and paint the walls.

A couple of days later, Ted was enjoying a nice hot bath in his completed bathroom. As he laid there soaking his ears perked up to an unsettling noise. It sounded like tiny claws against copper. He was sure the cat had died by now, so what could be making that noise. Ted was haunted by what he had done. Images of the cat’s twisted body trapped into the wall, the cat’s eyes glaring at him as he entombed it. Was his conscience getting the better of him? “Nah,” he thought, “I’m just paranoid.” On the fourth day he noticed that the patch was wet—but how? Ted placed his right hand over the patch to determine just how damp it was, and as his palm met the wall the faintest meow pierced through the wall into Ted’s ears. He fell backwards startled and in disbelief. Ted snapped, he stampeded to his garage, grabbed a hammer, ran back into the bathroom and began ripping the walls apart with the hook end of the hammer. He pulled away the pieces of broken drywall to find that Claude was still alive. The
cat was nothing but fur and bones. He survived by lapping up the dripping water from the broken pipe. Too weak to fight back, Claude surrendered to Ted’s rescue. Ted wrapped Claude in a bath towel and presented him to Mrs. Brinkley. She was delighted to have her baby back, but concerned that Claude wouldn’t have much time if they didn’t get him to the vet. Ted drove them to the animal hospital and insisted on paying for all the expenses. Claude stayed in the hospital for a week. He was extremely dehydrated and had several broken bones. Ted never told Mrs. Brinkley or anyone where he “found” Claude.

Shortly after Claude’s return home, Ted found a new one. He couldn’t stand the memories of that house and that cat, so he left the neighborhood to try it all over again somewhere new.
ASHLEY MULLINS

Borne Away

The gentle creak and slam of the screen door is the only thing that gave her leaving away.

Lisa slipped out sometimes just before the last rays of the sun died behind the curtain of the horizon, wearing her daddy's plaid work shirt, the smell of hay and town dirt still lingering at the sleeves. She wandered out through the long, low field, arms swinging lazily at her sides. She seemed to float there, curving and flowing with the dips and rises in the land, bare feet hidden in calf-high wild grass.

It was growing late in the year now, and the fingertips of winter reached closer and closer to the farm. She woke up in the night sometimes, swearing she could feel its breath against her bare neck, bitterly cold, unforgiving. Now it walked with her through the field, a delicate, freezing touch of breeze against her cheek.

And she smiled.

Out there, life was different. There was a line, she thought, that some things just couldn't cross. Some sort of hallowed, holy ground of forgiveness, where the demons of Worry and Cancer are kept at bay. They gnashed their teeth and screamed with banshee voices, fat tongues lolling in their mouths, eyes rolling in their sockets. But she just walked, deaf ear turned toward heaven. She would shed them away and wear a new skin.
There was a cluster of wild flowers growing to her right. She bent over and plucked them from the ground, holding them up against the dying light. Flecks of dirt tumbled from the green stalks and soared toward the ground in some kamikaze race. She didn’t know their name, only that they were something like sunflowers, petals bleached white as momma’s fresh bottled milk in the kitchen window.

Their petals were beginning to wilt a little, corners tucked toward the ground as though the weight of the air was finally just too much. Baby soft hairs fluttered against her forehead, tickling the skin along her temple and behind her ears. She smiled and held the flowers up, watching the stalks bend backward, petals dancing, shivering like natives caught in the throes of some primitive dance, answering the call of forces beyond them.

She pressed her hand against her chest and felt the curve of her breasts. A hollow, gnawing ache flared up in the pit of her stomach. She knew that she would soon lose one. She knew that she would be losing more than just a part of her body. She was going to lose a piece of herself, a bit of her womanhood, a fraction of sensuality, beauty, self-esteem. She thought the things that no one ever had the heart to say. They were too caught in the language of falsehoods, the voice of reassurance. Young and strong, definite remission, reconstruction available. You could tie up a broken heart with a pretty pink ribbon, but it would still be broken.

Lisa turned and faced the horizon. The clouds in the sky were dissipating above her head. Reds and golds washed away to deep, saturated indigos, purple like bruises. She closed her eyes and waited for the next sweep of the wind to rush over her face. And when it came,
she opened her fingers and released the makeshift bouquet. It dropped quickly, if not softly, to the ground, where it leaned against the deep grass in silent dignity. Lisa opened her mouth and laughed. She laughed until the sound broke off in her throat and trickled into a sigh. She laughed and pressed her palms up to the sky.

She was almost flying.
A Hare’s Chance

Stars will align with planets, planets will align with moons, moons will align with the sun and so on. Do these events affect a person’s life? Do these events affect a rabbit’s life or a giant’s life? Events may be caused by the suns alignment with Venus, or events may be caused by heavenly bodies presiding over divine crystal balls monitoring the universe and determining its worldly fate. In either case, fate is predisposed and is an unalterable force that affects all things of nature.

Shortly before the hour of dawn on a breezy spring evening, a full moon glows, as it illuminates the damp, cool air. A rabbit has lost his way. As he scurries through the tall wisps of the green blades of wet grass, snagging his tan, spotted coat on barbs of the brittle brush, he accidentally lands in the pit of a basement bedroom window well of an unsuspecting stranger. The bottom of the hole is filled with loose rocks, soft soil, and scattered with unidentified patches of intimidating weeds. The top half of the window pokes its shimmering head from the well to view the world with its transparent face. The depth is too much for a cuddly, baby bunny to overcome. He cannot muster the strength to leap for safety. He jumps erratically in the dark hole, ripping down silky strands of neglected spider webs.

One side of the brown rabbit’s temporary prison is the glass window, gazing at the world on its exterior side; peeping through the blinds, watching the snoozing stranger on the
other. The other three sides of the enclosure are four 2 by 12 pieces of lumber stacked on edge. This mound of timber and its smooth wood grain pattern create a retaining wall to ensure that the earth does not crumble onto the countenance of the bedroom window. Underneath the rabbit’s white, cottonball tail is the cold, jagged touch of a gravel floor. This will be home tonight.

The hare, now terrified and isolated, continues to hop recklessly with the cobwebs adhering to his sides, back, and belly. He thumps into the window. He thumps into the wooden wall. He thumps on the gravel. As he thumps into the window and lands noisily on the loose rock, the sleeping bedroom tenant awakens, panicked and fearful. The scratching of the gravel, and the chattering of the glass could be a burglar sniffing for an easy entrance into his home. The man arms himself with a baseball bat, preparing for a serious confrontation. Tonight is not the night for a burglar and there will be no confrontation this evening.

The lights have been flipped on, the blinds have been flung open, and the window sees on one side of its face Thumper lies motionless, staring at a giant. The giant stares back at the intruder, clutching a Louisville Slugger in his pale, thick, calloused hand. The bedroom dweller is poised to attack in nothing more than tattered, white cotton briefs that slump from one side of his hip. Weariness fills the man’s head. He swipes the back of his hand across his eyes, trying to wipe the confusion from them. The tired ogre is astounded by what he has found. Instead of a masked intruder, he stares at a tiny baby bunny rabbit in the earliest stages of his existence. Thumper will spend the evening in the giant’s bedroom window well tonight.
The thumping continues through the night. The annoyance of the constant beating of an infant rabbit hurling itself against the glass has compelled the giant to move to another bedroom, away from the noise. In the adjacent room the giant decides to formulate a plan to extract the rabbit from the hole. He will do it in the morning. Tonight, he falls fast asleep.

Good fortune permits the sun to rise again in the morning. The warm, golden beams of light caress the man’s face, and his sleep is interrupted once again. The man who Thumper has dubbed a giant arises and prepares his plan to rescue the rabbit from the captivity of his backyard. His plan is not to reach into the well and snatch the rabbit with his bare hand, because he postulates the rabbit is dirty and maybe infested with disease, so this will not be his course of action. There is a plan: A much bigger plan.

The idea the giant has devised is to lower a basket with a string attached. He attempts to fish the frightened varmint out. Fate has decided this fishing attempt will fail, causing the young man to be seventeen seconds off schedule. This was the plan.

Hovering over the hole with the morning sun beating at his back, the man lowers the contraption into the well. The sudden jostling of the basket alarms the rabbit. Instead of eagerly jumping into the basket, Thumper jumps over, hides under, and runs away from the rescue device. This angers the fishing giant. He must retreat inside to his cozy abode and think of an ulterior method for the salvation of the six inch long baby bunny. He wastes no time. Time is precious.
The giant returns to the well, still seventeen seconds off schedule, kneels on the ground and attempts to shovel the rabbit out. The unforeseen sequence of events has now affected the young man’s life. He is still running slightly behind schedule.

The man kneeling next to the hole attempts to scoop the rabbit out of the well. Thumper is terrified. He burrows himself into a crevice where the window meets the edge of the retaining wall. He shivers; he is scared; he is curious as to why a giant drags a bucket across the coarse gravel. He leaves his shelter and nibbles at the strange blue object with a curiosity and an innocence that only a baby rabbit would have. In an instant, Thumper is flung free from the confines of the giant’s bedroom window.

Still kneeling on the ground, gleaming with pride, the young man watches the relieved rodent scamper through the yard toward the fence. Thumper runs with such exuberance; he has been given a second chance at life. As he races through the yard, the barbs from the brush do not have time to attach to his velvety fur. He wedges himself under the fence’s wooden plank, and the arid soil of the giant’s domain. The man’s humanitarianism elates him, and he sits on the ground thinking about what a wonderful thing he has done. He wonders about the baby bunny growing into an adult hare, hoping his offspring never wander off their course, subjecting themselves to a night in a cavernous hole face to face with an angry giant. If their course is altered and they do end up outside a stranger’s bedroom window, the man hopes the next giant is as compassionate as he is. He is now thirty-six seconds off course.
This was destiny. Some celestial being, higher deity, or cosmic force decided that on this
day it was not time for a rabbit to perish. These forces are steadfast and do not waver. The fate
of Thumper was to live a night in a dark, isolated world, outside a strangers bedroom. Fate also
determined one special giant would be precisely thirty-six seconds late to work, thirty-six
seconds behind a truck barreling through a red light at the intersection precisely at the time
when he should have crossed its path. This was destiny, which could not be altered, and gave a
man with a giant heart a hair’s chance.
Lighthouse  BILINDA MILUM
A Warrior  ASHLEY NICOLE MIRACLE
Monopoly  JAESSA OWSLEY
Untitled  MIGUEL SAUCEDO-ROACHO
Evening Glow  TERESA TOPE
Pink Transparency  TERESA TOPE
Untitled  TERESA TOPE
Untitled  TERESA TOPE
Cattails at the Lake    CARA WISE
Rooftop  CARA WISE
Off Duty  CARA WISE
Frame Garden  CARA WISE
Biographical Information/Notes from Contributors:

Tiffany Avery is a student at ECTC. She is a graduate of Hart County High School. Tiffany enjoys cooking and spending time with family. She currently resides in Upton, Kentucky, with her husband, 4 year old son and is expecting another baby in July.

Darris Bates is a pre-nursing student, but calls English her first love. She has two beautiful cats, Lily and Amber, who unfortunately don’t get along so well. She likes to read, write, listen to music, and sew. She is also in the Lexington shadow cast for The Rocky Horror Picture Show; she plays Janet.

Nikole Bender-Saunders is a student at BCTC who often goes by Nana. She lives in Lexington, KY with her new husband Adam. They also live with their cat, "Cricket" and their puppy, "Captain Jack." She will be transferring soon to UK to work on a degree in Psychology.

Michael Benton teaches at BCTC. He uses theoretical fictions to stay sane. His short fiction piece “I am Past Imperfect” is the companion piece to “A Thanksgiving Speech that I Wasn’t Allowed to Give” that appeared in the first issue of Accolade. In his spare time he teaches film studies, peace studies, rhetoric/composition and critical theory at BCTC.

Don Boes teaches at BCTC. He teaches composition, literature, and creative writing. His poetry and reviews have appeared in approximately 75 magazines and journals. He has been awarded three Al Smith Fellowships from the Kentucky Arts Council. His first book, The Eighth Continent, was chosen by A. R. Ammons as the winner of the 1993 Morse Poetry Prize and published by Northeastern University Press. His poetry has appeared in the first issue of Accolade, as well.

Nancy Bronner teaches at BCTC (Nursing). The poem “Equatorial Blues,” was written after a week-long sailing trip in the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador in 2000. On that trip, she saw the most amazing wildlife, as all who visit these islands report; the night sky was ablaze with stars and the days were sun-drenched.

Michelle Burnside is a student at Madisonville Community College. She is a 2nd Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do, a recorded musician and music teacher, a PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer, and a Professional Clown. She moved to Kentucky 1 year ago, after having a successful music store in West Palm Beach Fl for 11 1/2 years with her husband Rick. She is an artist, writer and entrepreneur.
Madison Butler is a student at BCTC.

Darnell Cunningham is a native of Cleveland, Ohio. After residing in Midway for two years he now makes his home in Lexington, Kentucky. Darnell functions as the Help Desk Coordinator for BCTC Cooper and Regency Campuses. He is a twice honorably discharged Veteran of the United States Army’s 82nd airborne division and the 1st Bn 3rd Infantry “The Old Guard” He enjoys, reading, chess and working out at the gym in addition to computing of all sorts. Darnell’s specialty is in the field of IT Virtualization.

Claudia Hill Duffee teaches at BCTC, Computer & Information Systems. She obtained a Master’s Degree in Computers & Information Management (Webster University) to allow her to continue teaching for several colleges in her hometown, Orlando, Florida as well as providing software consultation for Fortune 500 companies in contract management. Her thesis research in Chinese cultural elements combined her experience in visual art and science as she studied artifacts in art museums (including on-line museums) to create a database useful for global product design. Since coming to Kentucky, Claudia has discovered a talent for creative writing by attending workshops and classes at The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning in downtown Lexington. You can see her continuing interest in nature and fine art reflected in her poems. Her poem “Energy” is an Ekphrastic Poem, in response to Hale Woodruff’s painting, Twilight.

Christopher Allen Einhaus is a freelance writer of fantasy, horror and sci-fi. His work is for public consumption at www.traumweltcreations.com. His day job is working at a public library and being part of a family with four kids. His night job is a Slush Wrangler for Apex Magazine at www.apexbookcompany.com/apex-online. Currently he is a part-time online student at Bluegrass for Information Management and Design.

Erin Fifield is an IMD student at BCTC, graduating this year. She lives in Lexington with her husband and two sons. She says she writes every day, but usually for no one else to read.

Johanna Flynn The poem ‘Maze of Sorrow” is dedicated to the two stillborn children she delivered, Angel Lee Flynn and Emily Hope Flynn. The website at http://www.myspace.com/tinyangelsinheavan is a memorial site she created for anyone who knows or who has lost a child due to stillbirth, miscarriage, or for any reason.

James B. Goode teaches at BCTC. He is a creative writer, essayist, photographer, and Appalachian scholar, who has written about the Appalachian region since undergraduate school in the 1960’s. He has authored four books of poetry and two technical books on coal mining, produced and directed two documentary films, published short stories in two major
anthologies, published over 500 poems in national and international magazines, and written over two hundred columns for the *New York Times*, the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, *Harlan Daily Enterprise*, *Coal County Extra*, and various other newspapers and magazines. Some of his poetry and fiction have appeared in the first issue of *Accolade*, as well.

**Patricia Holland** teaches at BCTC. For 25 years, she worked in Washington, D.C. as a writer and editor for the National Geographic Society. Then she moved to Kentucky to be closer to her family. She says she has expanded her family to include her colleagues and students at BCTC. She currently teaches English 101 and 102 on the Winchester campus and online.

**Priscilla Howard** is a student at BCTC. She enjoys writing poetry.

**Jeni Isaacs** enjoys writing during her free time. She is currently a student at JCTC and will be attending the University of Louisville in the fall of 2009. She lives in Louisville, Kentucky with her fiancé Aaron.

**Jalessa Owsley** is a student at BCTC. She enjoys drawing portraits, painting, and pottery. A graduate of Lincoln County High School, Jalessa is originally from Stanford, Kentucky. She still lives in Stanford with her mother, Debra Owsley.

**Bilinda Milum** is a sophomore at BCTC and transferred from ACTC in 2008. She is originally from West Virginia but now resides in Lexington, Kentucky. Among her favorite things to photograph are nature and domestic animals (especially her own). She is working towards a degree in Social Work and will eventually transfer to the University of Kentucky to pursue her Bachelor’s degree. The “Lighthouse” photograph was taken during a cruise to the Bahamas in 2003.

**Ashley Nicole Miracle** is a sophomore at SKCTC. She enjoys drawing as well as other types of artistry. She is originally and presently living in Miracle, Kentucky with her family.

**Ashley Mullins** was born and lives in southeastern Kentucky. She is a psychology major with hopes of bettering the world. She owns a peer counseling forum for teenagers and is the mother of eight shelter dogs. She was the story teller of her family as a child and is still passionate about words.

**Jennifer Neal** is a big animal lover who has 6 rescue dogs. The poem is about a Dachshund she had for 16 years.
**Miguel Saucedo-Roacho** is an international student from Mexico. He is a current student at BCTC studying Business Management. He enjoys drawing pictures about people, animals and cartoon characters. He plans to open some day an art school to teach how to draw.

**Teresa Tope** is an associate dean at BCTC. She was born and raised in Oak Hill, which sits at the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in southern Ohio. She is a published poet and enjoys taking photographs, as well as supporting the arts in many ways at BCTC and in the community.

**Cara Wise** is a student at BCTC. She is pursuing a degree for Photography. Her love for taking pictures developed in high school. She has had her work displayed in the high school exhibit at Art on the Square in Belleville, IL. After high school, Cara enrolled at Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC) and received a certificate in Web Design. She recently moved to Kentucky to be with her long time partner and plans to transfer to EKU to complete her degree.

**Patrick J. Wilkinson** is a student at BCTC.