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The Beacon III

Dominique Dorce

Nora Garriga

Kimberly Marshall

Cynthia C. Smith

Cynthia McHale-Hendricks

*Goodwin College, CHendricks@goodwin.edu*

*See next page for additional authors*

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Contributors
Dominique Dorce, Nora Garriga, Kimberly Marshall, Cynthia C. Smith, Cynthia McHale-Hendricks,
Jonathan Carney, Katlyn Bark, Bricherland Quinones, Jack Matthews, Marquita Abrams, Gladys Rios, Lisa
Smullen, Roger Ellsbury, Jamie Matos, William P. Rivera Sr., Amanda Haesaert, Maria Lorena Valentino, Ryan
Bonacum, Tyesha Page, Jaime Ingaran, Roberto Josue Sanchez, Randy Laist, Brian A. Dixon Dr., Emilie
Peirolo, Sherrilyn G. Bernier Ed. D., Maria Lorena Valentino, Wilma Long, Desmond Batts, Kim Scaplen,
Teara Aris, and A .Q

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GOODWIN COLLEGE PRESENTS

THE BEACON

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One Riverside Drive
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www.Goodwin.edu
800.889.3282

EDITORS
Matthew Engelhardt
Brian A. Dixon
Cynthia McHale-Hendricks
Randy Laist
Ernie Varela

THE WRITERS GUILD
Brian A. Dixon
Dominique Dorce
Matthew Engelhardt
Alan Kramer
Randy Laist
Jamie Mattos
Claude Mayo
Cynthia McHale-Hendricks
Bruce Morton
Cheyenne Seymour
Ernie Varela

LAYOUT
Caleb Prue

The views expressed within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Goodwin College.
THE BEACON
DEAR READERS,

It is my utmost pleasure to present you with the ensuing pages — a host of writings that stood out from a pile of over one hundred submissions. This magazine is the jewel of many afternoons of polishing, collaboration, and critical selection. The magazine before you exemplifies a writer’s sense of control, authenticity, purpose, and ambition. I trust that you will appreciate the rich words of these exemplary writers. As writing itself can act as a bridge between the writer and the rest of society, turning these pages represents crossing that bridge in order to uncover one of the many treasures of the Goodwin College community. We get to hear what issues prevail, what statements permeate, and what events inspire — to see what really matters today — in one community of vibrant students, scholars, teachers, staff, and administrators. It is my hope that you read, reread, share, store, and ultimately cherish this third edition of The Beacon.

Cynthia McHale-Hendricks

Cynthia McHale-Hendricks, Editor
Evolving riots over cash creating urgent menace
Making time go by fast, remember when your goal was last
To pass the mind test so society won’t be a pest

Now it’s too late—check the time rate
Boys going in to bring you to the head of state
What’s your mission plan now?
You better be slick and hide behind the band sounds

Then take the shot, when no one is around
Take the low flank, escape the high beams
Activate sly schemes, so you won’t be followed into the mind dream
That’s your worst enemy, evil nightmare felony

Why does Johnny question sleep?
It’s the weakness for understanding enemies
Which they have the sense to find a friend of me
And have them backstab the end of me

It’s their evil plan
Devotion to their land
All they care about is money
And nothing in their hands
They don’t cherish precious moments
They crush it into pieces
Like the animals
They’re losing their species

It’s a hard struggle if you live in this world
And don’t care about money
It’s like leaning to hurl

You get ranked on your life
Not saying bucking
But that lower position
In which you fall more than twice

It’s the economy
But my potential pulls higher than astronomy
The planets and the stars
Is my high flying prodigy

Scientificology
My brain’s gonna sprout
A brand new side of me

He would be older
More vogue and bolder
Height to touch the sky
And the clouds reach his shoulders

He speaks with the light
The oral-nomic sight
You can see his vibrant visual
The soundwaves are physical

Grab it with your hand
And put it in your pocket
Then travel the world
And see what unlocks it
It can be great
Or it can be disastrous
Depending how you use it
You must not have no mind for stress

Learn the technique
Soon you will master it
It becomes useful
Then no one can cast it

You first start potential
Learning every step
Then prestige kinetic
Vaulting as the best

They see you as the master
Leader to the rest
Goal to change society
Your actions are a test

But you decide to take your life
To change the world to right
In your own eyes
Your life was always nice

You change your sudden path
Knowing it was drastic
Decide to disappear
When the moment lasted

The people see you’re real
Understanding choices
It becomes clear
Listen to the voices

You can realize something
In the actual moment
Life is what you make it
From your own choices
“Vamos a comer aguacate.”
Papi always gets the best avocados
Maybe it’s in his technique
But they always taste so good when he prepares them
The alligator pear
Rough and tough on the outside
But surprisingly rich and inviting on the inside
With a solid inner core

Just like papi.
Look warily at those
Who dance by rote
At the ends of things—

The carnival barker grown mute
And morose, daily dour
At the last turnstile grind—

The street cleaners sweeping
Away another’s nights revels,
Grimly disposing
Other’s festive dross—

The nurse’s assistant,
Who’d never known the old man,
And cleans out finally
The left-behind, futile
Get well cards
From Room 604—

The church volunteer,
Who yearly takes the palms,
Once blessed but unclaimed,
Discarded or dropped amid the pews,
And burns them into reminders
Of mortality—

Look warily
BOSTON STRONG

Kimberly Marshall

Terror. I never really knew the meaning of the word until today.

At exactly 2:50 p.m. on April 15th, 2013, my life changed forever. I was just steps from the finish line in my first ever Boston Marathon. For two years, this was something that I had been training for.

The sound of the bomb going off to my left was a sound I can’t even put into words. It was loud and terrifying. The ground shook under my feet. My knees buckled under the sudden shock and I fell to the ground. My ears instantly started ringing, but no matter how loud the ringing was, I could still hear the sound of people screaming in terror around me. As I looked around, a thick cloud of smoke began to rise. Metal shards of shrapnel flew in every direction. The fact that they missed me was nothing short of a miracle.

Suddenly, another blast, this time from further down the road. I looked back. There was more smoke, more screaming, people scattering and running for their lives. I didn’t know what to do. I froze. Police officers hurried in, running towards the destruction.

I finally gained my bearings and stood, not sure where I should go or what I should do. I looked around and saw pools of blood. People lying on the ground injured. It made my heart sink. It made me sick to my stomach.

Then, from the corner of my eye, I saw a little girl. She was about eight and crying hysterically. I rushed to her side. As I got closer, I could see why she was crying. Her blonde hair was matted with blood. She was gripping her right arm. Without thinking, I tore the sleeve from my under armor and quickly tied it around her arm. I picked her up and rushed towards the medical tent. When I reached the medical tent, someone took the girl away and I was pushed out. I’ll never know her name. I’ll never know if she was okay.

Back outside I saw hundreds if not thousands of Bostonians rushing to the aid of those who were injured. I rushed back towards the bomb sites to continue to do all I could to help.

Today, I can say that I am a proud Bostonian. Though crisis has struck, we rose up. Boston strong.
A child goes out to play  
And stops to think about the day  
He doesn’t really see  
The effects of the rain  
A child comes out to play  
And looks forward to the day  
He doesn’t care about the mud  
And he certainly doesn’t care for the bugs!  
A child rolls out to play  
And jumps about the day  
He gets knee scrapes and rope burns  
And he plays with disgusting worms!  
A child these days is something to admire  
Their burning questions and desires  
Are among things that parents would like  
But their childhood has already taken flight
Truth is blue
not just any shade of blue
an honest blue
darkened with hues of purple
light enough
so the white light
shines through for clarity
distinguishing it from any other color.

Truth in practice
falls on a spectrum.
The closer it falls to the median
the more radiantly it glows.
The balance of light
and dark is achieved.

Finding truth is beautiful.
Searching and seeking illuminates.
Once found,
facts may color the outcome,
yet truth
at its core
is still blue.
COLD OPEN

EXT. BEACH IN RIO DE JANEIRO - DAY

BROOKE and ELLIE walk along the beach. Brooke is wearing a FLOWING WHITE SUNDRESS with FLOWERS IN HER HAIR. Ellie’s attire is more beach appropriate.

ELLIE
I love Rio. The sun. The beach. The men. Didn’t that massage feel great?

BROOKE
(hesitant) Yeah.

ELLIE
You didn’t like yours?

BROOKE
I did, but, I guess I didn’t expect him to touch me everywhere.

ELLIE
Everywhere?

BROOKE
Well, yeah.

ELLIE
Brooke, they’re not supposed to touch you everywhere.

BROOKE
Then why do they call it a full body massage?

ELLIE
Huh. Now I feel cheated.
BROOKE
Look. A beach wedding! Let’s crash it.

Brooke pulls Ellie along.

A modest BEACH WEDDING is set up with everyone in place except for the bride. The OFFICIANT looks impatiently at RICARDO, the groom. Next to him is the SHADY BEST MAN, who holds a briefcase. Ricardo notices Brooke in her white sundress, and gestures to the SHADY BEST MAN, who ushers her forward.

BROOKE
Ooh, looks like we’re actually going to be in it.

ELLIE
These people must not have a lot of friends.

The Shady Best Man leads Brooke right up to the front.

BROOKE
I think you’re right.

The Shady Best Man manipulates Brooke into position next to Ricardo and takes paperwork out of his briefcase.

ELLIE
Somebody touch me?

BROOKE
(to Shady Best Man) What are you doing?

RICARDO
(to Brooke) You are late.

BROOKE
What the heck?

Ellie grabs a flower off a bystander, sticks it in her hair and inserts herself beside Brooke.

ELLIE
(to Brooke, whisper) I heard they were filming a resort ad today.
BROOKE
Ooooh! Right.

Ricardo nods at the Officiant.

OFFICIANT
Dearly beloved, we are gathered today to join together...

RICARDO
Ricardo da Silva.

OFFICIANT
Ricardo da Silva and...

BROOKE
Brooke London.

OFFICIANT
Brooke London in holy matrimony

The Shady Best Man, who is busy filling out paperwork, makes a gesture to hurry it up.

OFFICIANT (CONT’D)
I now pronounce you man and wife.

ELLIE
That was quick.

Brooke leans over for a photogenic kiss from Ricardo but the Shady Best Man inserts himself between them.

SHADY BEST MAN
(to Ricardo) Sign here. And here. And here.

Ricardo complies. Brooke looks miffed. The Shady Best Man takes out a camera to photograph Brooke – she’s happy again, posing. He leans forward and yanks the flower out.

SHADY BEST MAN
Look straight at me.

Ellie tries to insert herself in the picture.
SHADY BEST MAN (CONT’D)
(to Ellie) You — get out.

(to Brooke) You — no funny face.

Ricardo sees out of the corner of his eye a BRIDE dressed similarly to Brooke approaching on a JETSKI as Brooke signs the paperwork. Ricardo looks increasingly alarmed. The Bride on the jetski sees the ceremony underway and pulls a U-turn.

SHADY BEST MAN
(to Ricardo) You will get your green card in the mail as agreed. Do not contact me again.

RICARDO
But I think she’s the wrong — — —

The Shady Best Man snaps his briefcase shut and strides away.

ELLIE
(to BROOKE) Come on, Ellie, this wedding sucks.

BROOKE
Let’s go hit them up for a free drink for this.

Brooke and Ellie head off to the resort bar.

RICARDO
Wait, you don’t understand. We just got married.

Ricardo looks between them and the Shady Best Man who is now quite far away. He decides to chase after the Shady Best Man.

RICARDO (CONT’D)
STOP! STOP!

Ricardo gets to where he last saw him, but the Shady Best Man is now lost in the crowd. In the background is a lavish wedding photoshoot, with a model groom and bride, professional photographer, and the resort’s logo vividly displayed.

END OF COLD OPEN
THE GOAL

Katlyn Bark

Ever since I can remember, I’ve had a title other than my natural birth name. My name is Katlyn Bark, and I happen to have a condition known as Cerebral Palsy.

It has tagged along with me my entire life, making the everyday seem impossible at times. This label came with an enormous amount of pain, countless hospital visits, and hours of rehabilitation. Along with the agony came modifications for everything, including wheelchairs, special shoes, and therapy equipment. Here I was, this little girl already with a laundry list of problems. How was I to adapt to a world that wasn’t made for a person like me?

The early days of my childhood were toughest for me. I was watching my cousins experience the typical things a child should at the age of eight. Activities such as riding a bike, running through the grass, or playing tag weren’t an option for me. But, I wouldn’t say I was jealous or envious, just angry at the fact that I couldn’t do the things that I so longed to do. I wanted nothing more than to belong, to fit in with my fellow siblings. However, little did I know that one fall afternoon would change my outlook forever.

My family and I were living in Florida at the time in a cozy, close-knit trailer park. I loved that place. Our houses were lined around a gravel circle, and I would often see a trail of bicycles trying to lap each other as they rounded every corner. Veering off the circle, I would notice a mysterious dirt path that when taken would lead me to our domain of fun. In the very center of the park was the crown jewel of our entertainment: the playground. It was the place of exploration, discovery, and self-enjoyment. Beyond the playground stretched a vast land of earth that seemed to go on for miles. We called it “the field,” and it would become the template for what seemed to be the greatest soccer game ever played.

It was just an ordinary day in the trailer park for me. I didn’t have anything special planned, but it wasn’t uncommon for all the kids to spontaneously get together and play. We practically lived with each other, so commuting wasn’t a problem. I remember this day in particular because the weather was changing. There was a chill in the air, a chill that resembled the after taste of a peppermint patty and one that when I took a deep breath, cooled the back of my throat. The leaves were painted with colors of deep red, yellow, and orange and the grass had lost its lustrous green hue. It was replaced by a pale, brownish-green that appeared to be like a rotting head of lettuce.
Despite the rapid transformation, we continued to play and made a spur of the moment decision to start a soccer game. I thought that I would be on the sidelines once again, but to my amazement, one of my cousins had assigned me the position of the goalie. I didn’t know what to think. I was dumbfounded. They had actually wanted me to play! After I took a moment to gather my thoughts, I resorted to my usual mode of transportation: crawling. It was what was easiest for me, and I hated being cooped up in my chair all the time. However, this wasn’t my normal crawl. I sprinted across that field, my knees barely hitting the grass beneath me. My lungs were burning with every breath I took of the crisp, cool air. But I didn’t care because I was going to play.

The game started slowly, and my cousins remained at the upper end of the field for the longest time. I sat there watching the rapid movement of the ball as it bounced from player to player, reminding me of popcorn kernels cooking in the microwave. My stance was that of an English bulldog and my stare intense, anticipating any change of direction by the players. My heart began to pound as I noticed a stampede of kids heading my way. My eyes resembled a ball in a pinball machine as I watched the soccer ball veer left, then right, then up, and down. They were roaring towards me, their eyes filled with both determination and anger. I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t think. I closed my eyes tight and leaped forward where I had met the ball full force.

The sting left on both of my arms was intense. It was as if I had been slapped with a belt on fresh sunburn. However, the pain quickly subsided as I heard the cheering voices of my cousins. My heart was filled with an enormous amount of joy and pride. For once, I was the hero. I had stopped that goal from being made, and it was something neither my cousins nor I thought I could ever do.

The label that once attached itself to my name seemed to fade away, for I had finally fit in. I was no longer Katlyn Bark with Cerebral Palsy. No, on that day I became Katlyn Bark the player!
I sigh at our generation,
They lose sight at their whole person,
They look to stars and useless charts,
The child inside slowly departs.

I mourn at stilted views of priests,
Their horror of change does not cease,
Their imagined world slowly parts,
The child inside slowly departs.

I cry for the loss of parents,
They lose their childhood innocence,
They seem to harbor broken hearts,
The child inside slowly departs.

I scream at news and media,
They boost adverse phenomena,
The good of things sells to no hearts,
The child inside slowly departs.

I plead to new educators,
To please be patient with scholars,
As their lives get ready to start,
The child inside slowly departs.
He went on to explain, “I’m donating my body to science.” He and our mom were always compassionate about helping others. When my brother and I were growing up, they were scout leaders, Sunday school teachers, members of the high school band parents’ organization, PTO officers, and active on many town committees. While other parents dropped their children off at their various activities, ours didn’t drop us off—they stayed to help.

When Mom died as the result of a tragic accident, a new chapter in Dad’s life began. He had to learn new skills to assume all the tasks that had been Mom’s share of the workload. Dad continued to be involved in town activities and volunteered his time and talent. When he was in his late 70s, after much prodding from me and my brother, he bought his first computer and soon mastered it. Almost daily his grandchildren would receive the latest joke he had heard via email, and his screen name was always active on our “buddy list.”

The computer expanded his world, and that’s where he learned about Harvard University’s Anatomical Gifts Program. As with many of his decisions, he gave it thorough and quiet thought before announcing his intentions to his family. He had already sent for the required paperwork, quickly completed it, and mailed it in along with the volumes of reports detailing his complex medical history. Within weeks of submitting his application he proudly announced, with his wry sense of humor, that he had “been accepted by Harvard Medical School!” Our family was proud of him, as even his final act would be to give of himself to help others.
Within a year of his acceptance, Dad died peacefully at his kitchen table in the wonderful assisted living center that had been his home for the final four years of his life. When my brother and I went to the funeral home to make arrangements to have him transported to the medical school, we found that he had been there within the month, had written his obituary, paid for all services, and had made arrangements to be transported to Harvard upon his death. We were only momentarily surprised at this last act of thoughtfulness for his family, and then we smiled, looked at each other, and just shook our heads.

Dad left for medical school on the day that he died. There was no time for a wake or funeral, as he needed to arrive at the school within twenty-four hours of his death. Our family and friends gathered a month later to remember him at a memorial service where we recalled his service to the people of his community.

As the days went by, I often thought about Dad. I couldn’t help but picture his body being intensely and carefully explored by eager medical students. How much might they learn from this medical library? Steel rods in his neck, a naturally fused hip that resulted from tuberculosis of the bone that he developed from drinking unpasteurized milk when he was a child, and the evidence of countless other medical and surgical procedures were there for students to study. He and Mom had spent so much time at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston that we often remarked that they should have a room named after them there. I often wondered what those students would discover as they explored the mysteries that lay beneath his countless scars.

As I imagined my Dad’s body being opened and dissected, I surprisingly didn’t have feelings of revulsion or disgust, but rather those of pride and hope—that our Dad would help these doctors of the future to better treat a patient, develop a new medical procedure, or perhaps even save a life. My only concern was that those students who received his final gift would treat him with respect.

Several months after Dad arrived at Harvard, National Public Radio ran a feature story on medical schools and student experiences learned from their study of cadavers, or human donors as they are often called. The extensive interview took place in the laboratory as the students conducted their research. As their excitement was unleashed at each new discovery of how the human body was put together, I couldn’t help but imagine that it was my Dad they were learning from. Although the descriptions were quite graphic, I didn’t change the station but rather listened intently.

I was gratified by the sensitivity that the students showed towards the person they were studying. One of the new students in the class talked about a discussion she and her lab partners had before they actually began working on the “donor” assigned to them. They all agreed that they wouldn’t give him a name, as students might have naively been inclined to do, as the person “already had his own.” I was reassured that Dad would be treated with the respect that I had hoped for and that he deserved.

A little more than a year after his death, Dad’s ashes were returned to us. On a quiet Saturday afternoon we buried him in our family plot and held his graduation ceremony in our small hometown on Buzzards Bay.
I’m holding on to you
No, I won’t let you go
You mean so much to me
And I want to tell you so

You make me laugh
And you make me smile
So I’ve decided
To keep you around for a while

You’ve proven to me
That even in my mess
You’re still here with me
Yes, you’ve passed every test

You look out for me
For me you want what’s best
Because of that I know
You stand above the rest

You are more than a friend
I am with you ’til the end
I don’t take you for granted you see
I love you unconditionally

So thank you for being by my side
Thank you for being my guide
Thank you for helping me see
Just how much you truly love and care for me
Hurdles

Gladys Ríos

Responsibility accepted instead of bypassed.
The fast revolve of the wheel has not yet yielded its crop.
Penalized, unsupported, and left to rot.
The grey mist unfolds—halts.
In its oily choke-inducing glory.
All that is left is either Fight or Flight, sorry.

Soft rays of light barely inspire fight, but the body grows weary, the mind blank.
Soft, self-whispers of persistence, the stubborn bone of pride.
Forward, against, and over the bars.

A mask, a smile, a flash of the past.
Methods to cope with the strain of the clash.
In silence, a private waged fight. A hero, an enemy, continues in strife.
A shake, a shout, is barely perceived.
In black quiet turmoil, she loudly weeps.
Defeat or relinquished is a matter of pride.
Forward, against, over the bars.

Anger, fear, a combustible mix.
A spirit diminished by the ugly, seen.
Committed, devotion waters its seeds.
The promises of future so obscurely glimpsed — ignite and nourish the first within.
I AM

Lisa Smullen

Beautiful white gown, saying “I do,” soul mate.
Admiration and respect, good times and bad, sometimes a “nag.”
Sickness and in health, until death do we part, I will love you forever, I give you my heart.
Learning to cook, burning a few, making a list titled “Honey Do.”

I am a Wife.

Labor pains, baby’s first breath, my pride and joy, is it a girl or a boy?
Sleepless nights, rocking to sleep, singing lullabies, until I can’t hear a peep.
Many “boo-boos” to kiss, diapers to change, I did this five times, I must be deranged.
First day of school, I cry as they leave, finally some peace and quiet, it’s hard to believe.
Setting some boundaries, unconditional love, rebellious children, I pray to above.
All grown up, where did the time go, I am so proud, I want them to know.

I am a Mother.

Heaven and hell, down on my knees, praying for the “broken,” loving my enemies.
Lifting my hands, praising my God, forgiving those who hurt me, it’s so very hard.
Dying for my sins, He is in my heart, now life has meaning, no longer set apart.

I am a Believer.

Compassion, human touch, encouraging words when it hurts so much.
Healing the sick, sore, tired feet, no time for a break, families to greet.
Advocate, the very weak are unable to fight, to die with dignity it is only right.
Relieving the pain, no one should suffer, when leaving this place to go to another.

I am a Nurse.

Setting goals, fulfilling dreams, I’m going back to school, so it seems.
Some anxiety and stress, excitement too, fear of failure I refuse to let rule.
Overcoming obstacles is part of the plan, my professor who teaches ASD 120, well, he is “the man.”
Feeling empowered as I succeed, I will work as hard as I can to earn my degree.

I am a Student.

Who am I? All things together you see, make a person, I am “Me.”
I was really pressed for time, when you asked me to comment on what you had written; I had a few moments, so I started to read through the garden of your poem until

I was captivated by the beauty of each flower in your verse.
Ever since my first discovery,

It seems I’ve craved you lustily.
Over many years I have waited,
Eagerly anticipated,
Each new encounter as presented,
And each long lapse I have resented.

The sight of you just makes me weak,
So gone even the words I speak
Cannot adequately describe the pleasure
I find as I explore your treasure.
The smell of you excites my senses.
I have to touch you. I am defenseless.

Now that I have you in my grasp,
I can’t help but to think, at last.
I open wide to take you in
As your warm juice drips down my chin.
A little sweet, a little spicy.
Umm, so good, and slides so nicely
Inside my mouth.

Damn, I love my mama’s barbeque ribs!!!
I WAS BORN IN MANHATTAN

William P. Rivera Sr.

I was born in Manhattan, New York. I am one of thirteen in a family with many fathers.

My mom, whom I love so dearly, seemed to fall a little short when it came to a relationship. Just about after every third child, a new sperm donor contributed to three more kids. I never knew my dad, but I kind of remember looking at a picture of him holding my sister, Wilma. My mom left my dad because he was an alcoholic and was very abusive in any way he could be. To this day, I would still like to meet him even though, for the early part of my childhood, I hated him for what he did to my mom. I’m a deep thinker, mind wanderer, self-therapeutic loner. Every chance I get, I graze into my past finding new things I didn’t or couldn’t remember. We moved to Hartford, Connecticut, in 1975. Only 8 of us came with Mommy. We moved to Stowe Village, a low income housing project in the north end of Hartford. My mom got a job at the school I was going to which made it all the better. I can still smell Mommy’s perfume when she would come over and kiss me as she gave me my lunch. Her cooking was absolutely amazing!

One day my older brother, Gilberto, had an asthma attack at home. I was there when this happened, and I still can only muster up flashes of that day. I don’t even know if my mother was there. Gilberto was only thirteen when he abruptly passed away. It was on the news; apparently the medics could not find the apartment, and that delay, I believe, may have contributed to his death. I miss Gilberto; I think of him, and I wish things could’ve been different. At the funeral, everyone was there. My mom crying, my sisters consoling one another, and my brothers trying to keep everyone together is all I can remember. Things did not get better after that. We moved two blocks up the street but in the same projects.
A year after Gilberto’s death, my mother lost her job and went on welfare. I knew we were on welfare because I would go with her to get cheese on the first of the month. This line was so long. I would witness neighbors fighting, knives being pulled out, and police arresting someone. I can’t recall what day or even what month it was, but I came home from school to find Mommy surrounded by family and friends and praying. I didn’t quite understand at the time; religious music was on and lots of spiritual candles were lit. Each candle had a distinct smell and a picture of different religious figures. Mommy was screaming as they made her stand up. Still not understanding what was going on, the ambulance arrived and took my mom away. Mommy had a stroke; she was only thirty six at the time. I went to see her at the hospital. The first time I saw her, her head was shaved with stitches that held the front of her head together. I was only six at the time, and inside I was terrified for what I saw. She couldn’t remember me for that moment in time, and I cried. I cried on the way home, and sometime that night I cried myself to sleep.

Things were totally different at home now that Mommy was in the hospital. It didn’t take much time before my older sisters, Lyda and Lucy, were having parties and drugs in the house. Days became weeks, weeks became months, and months eventually became years. Mommy never came home. She never got better, but she never got worse. What got worse was my childhood. Wilma, Willis, Ricky, and I were thrown into different foster care until my brother Edwin came and got us. He promised, and he did. Before Edwin was capable of taking care of us, the foster homes were a rollercoaster. I was called spick, made to starve by my own sister, and saw my younger brother, Willis, beat on top of wounds. Lyda would make him kneel on rice and hold Hi-C cans while she watched. One day, Willis didn’t comb his hair, so she shaved his head with a razor and it bled! She put alcohol on it and beat him because he was crying from the alcohol burning! I wish I could have stopped her, but I was afraid of her. Lyda has AIDS from all the heroin and partying she did. Ralph died of AIDS in the mid 90’s. Martha, whom I miss so dearly and is the one biggest influence in my life, died of AIDS too. When Martha died, I was living in East Hartford in a one-room apartment. I could see a silhouette of a cross right over the futon that I slept on.

I remember Martha when her T-cells were getting low. She would tell me, “Wilito, I’m so scared of dying.” As her T-cell became less, more hospital visits followed. Wilma called me on the day she died; that day was a cold, wintery day accompanied by sleet and high winds. Martha was the coolest sister anyone could have. She never did things like Lyda and Lucy did. Martha’s husband was a heroin addict and apparently made his way up to New York state and shared needles. She took him back in, and the rest is pretty much written. The light she has given to all of us has given me more reasons to be a better person. She would always say, “Live life, live love.” I can still hear her laugh.

I have no complaints about my life. I can actually write a book about it. I can sincerely say that I am the person today for the sacrifices given by my mother, my sister, Martha Araceliz Santiago, Gilberto, and Ralph. Mommy is still here, in a rehab center permanently in East Hartford. I visit her as much as possible, sometimes twice a week, and sometimes once every two weeks. Every time I go there, when she sees me, she rushes to me as fast as she can in her wheelchair. When I leave, she never stops looking at the car until it is out of sight. I look back in the rear view mirror, and I always choke up. Her memory is going; her ability to stay healthy is an ongoing battle.

I am not rich, but my health is good. I am not poor, but I live week to week with little money I work hard for. I am humble, but those who don’t know me have said my looks are intense. Most likely they have caught me tapping into so many lost memories that I bring back to life. My brothers’ and sister’s deaths are my lifeline. I see Gilberto’s and Ralph’s features in my son, Wilito. Two years ago, my daughter was born. I named her Araceliz, for Martha, and middle name Carmen, for Mommy. I find myself now and again thinking about my childhood and what has happened to all of us. I’m grateful and honored to able to write such spontaneous memories.
combustion catapults
children claim copper pennies
in exchange
bang, bang
a vicious incident of repeat
treasure houses in robust
districts illuminate rainbows
sniff, sniff
juvenile car careens down cliff
a vicious incident of repeat
flaccid smiles
moldy rotten faculties
debris spread around
beep, beep
clouds of sand dissipate
quiet bodies lay
a vicious incident of repeat
a whisper claims peace
a snarl opts war
two countries clash
his fist strikes her face
camisole torn-
knee, groin meet
weak legs scamper to flee
a vicious incident of repeat
residual residence abound
magnates perspire innocence
avalanche of debt
market pockets swell
tsk, tsk
business as usual- oh well!
violece begets itself in hidden degrees
make victims, create enemies
repeats itself incidentally
Sitting in the front row of her son’s graduation, she mumbled, “God, he looks just like him.”

As she sat there, waiting for his name to be called, she couldn’t help but daydream about how she had met her husband. She was twenty-five and working at a sports bar when he walked in one Thursday night. He ordered Johnnie Walker on the rocks and she was taken aback by that. He seemed too young to drink scotch on the rocks. Her father used to drink scotch on the rocks. She brought it over, he smiled, and that was it—she was his.

The following week she saw an order of Johnnie Walker on the rocks sitting on the service bar. He was sitting in another different section but she brought it over anyway. She just wanted to see that smile again. They talked as much as she could that night.

After that, she didn’t see him for a few weeks, though she always looked for him or the scotch. One Thursday night she was at the bar with her friends, having a drink. She turned around and there he was, standing right behind her with that smile on his face. They talked and danced and had a great time all night. This time she was smart and gave him her phone number, and that was it—they were inseparable. They fell in love immediately. They got married and built a life together. They were happy.

The sound of her son’s name being called snapped her back to the present. She clapped as he walked across the stage, shaking hands with all the necessary officials. He looked just like him. She had said that from day one. Her son gets tired of hearing it, but she can’t help it.

The rest of the day was a blur to her, a sea of blue and gold, smiles, pictures, handshakes. That night, she sat at home at the kitchen table, looking through the pictures of the day. He looks just like him.

She couldn’t help but notice how empty the pictures looked without him.

She stood on the left, their son in the middle, and his empty space on the right.

She missed him. She loved him.

He would have been proud.
Too many hours of day, 
craving for the night. 
Flapping wings 
and dimming lights.

Medieval horses secretly running, 
aligning for the imminent war. 
Take the sleep away, please, 
don’t give it back!

Brandish your axes, 
Joust your lance, 
Pray for the Goddess... 
Your knees will never touch the ground!

Maria Lorena Valentino
LONGING

Ryan Bonacum

Trying forever to touch the fleeting reflections
Twisted vines claw at my heart twice seared
A single flower marks the pale scar
Of an immortal memory till now revered
Longing strangles a star of glass, seen from afar
Snaring these feet, cradling them in a bitter hold
The thorns are too pleasant to tear away
Against this temptation I cannot help but fold.
Wallowing in a field of needles, my memories at play
A flower that grows at ease under frost
Makes even the barren ice seem perfect
Wandering in such a land comes at a cost
No more grace from life will you collect
A potted plant with its roots shriveled
Has no ties to the living Earth
Forever it remains gasping for water, crippled
Damned to longing by a hand once meaning rebirth
Past beauty always fades to aching remembrance
Because a missing limb is lost till death
A shattered star and withered flower’s dull radiance
Chokes me till I no longer draw breath
Who would want to when left alone in the night?
Basking in a pool of sundered connections
Sobbing for the return of a glimpsed light
ME AND MY WORM

Tyesha Page

One rainy day on my way home from school,
I found a big worm and thought it was cool.

I picked up the worm with my bare hand,
Held it up high, thinking, "How grand!"

The worm was so cute and wiggled a lot.
I put him in my pocket to show Mom what I’d caught.

What will she say when I show her my find?
Will she let me keep it? I hope she won’t mind.

Mom was in the kitchen when I showed her what I’d found.
She screamed, "No way! Put it back in the ground!"

Now I’m so angry, she always says, "No."
If she won’t let me keep it, then I will just go!

So me and my worm packed a sandwich or two,
Ran out the door and down the street we both flew.

We walked to the park and sat on the bench.
I pulled out my worm and noticed a stench.

He looked kind of floppy, but wiggled a bit.
I thought, "Oh, my gosh, my worm is not fit!"

I laid him in the dirt and let him go free.
I guess that my pocket was not the best place to be.
Brush off the vestiges of somber passages
Try remembering the joy in newly born rays of sun
light filtering like fingers through the branches of winter
aching to reach you
to cheer you
to heal you

Focus
this isn’t lasting
it is all like the tide
Accept

Smile
if even by force
against strangling tears
if you must

You have already come a long way
There is only forward
never backward
Step lightly herein
do not trudge
you might miss a key and irreplaceable event

In this way
arrive where you were meant to be
NURTURE

Nurture

Passion
Needs Commitment
With strong motivations
To grow

Time

Will help

So will Hope

LAUGH

Roberto Josue Sanchez
ONLY IN MIAMI

A.Q.

Grabbing the dollar

The street bum turned, shamed, around

To answer his cell phone
By the forty-seventh hour of Powell’s second shift of Operation Phantom Fury, the noise in the unit base had become so persistent a clamor that he was no longer aware of it.

Beneath it, from beyond the cubicle curtains and hardwall modules of the 31st Combat Surgical Hospital, echoed the thunder cracks of distant artillery strikes. Casualties would continue to be delivered by Blackhawk or by Sea Knight in increasing waves as the infantry battalions continued the push into al-Naziza and Jolan. Gunnery Sergeant Gutteridge, his face and chest a scarlet map of welts and wounds, was among the least threatened patients.

Powell pushed his glasses high on his sweaty nose and snapped on a fresh pair of latex gloves in order to inspect the more severe burns. It took only a simple evaluative question regarding the sergeant’s proximity to the blast for him to begin reliving what had happened in the dust-blown alleyways of the Jolan district.

“He was standing by the open trunk of a car,” Gutteridge recalled, his voice raspy. “He had his back to us. The I.E.D. must have been inside. Kaplan called for him to put up his hands. That was it. The car just... popped.”
As a nurse jostled past with a tray of sterilized instruments, Powell surveyed the wounds in silence. Master Sergeant Kaplan had died in the street, along with three other marines. In the aftermath, Gutteridge had been dragged out of the blood and the dirt and airlifted to Baghdad.

Reaching for the chart tucked under his arm, Powell began to review the patient’s progress aloud. Epidural and subdural hematomas had been evacuated. Bleeding had been controlled. The Kevlar had been vital, though the explosion had driven shrapnel into Gutteridge’s neck, shoulder, and under the gaps of the vest, deep into his chest. In a way, Powell remarked, the fact that the insurgent had been standing over the I.E.D. at the moment of detonation had proven inadvertently lifesaving.

“He tried to kill us all,” Gutteridge snapped, reaching up to finger the thick bandages about his neck and throat. “How bad is it? The shrapnel.”

Powell answered by prying open a file folder to retrieve an x-ray. He held up the ghostly negative image for the soldier to see. More than a dozen fragments—some mere slivers, some great shards—were scattered across the radiograph, like daggers stabbing through the soft tissue.

Powell paused to mop sweat from his forehead with a gauze pad he kept in his coat pocket.

The shrapnel itself was bone, he explained. It was impossible to say what each piece might once have been, but fragments of femur, clavicle, vertebrae, or teeth had been torn from out of the insurgent’s body by the blast. Those pieces were now a part of Gunnery Sergeant Gutteridge.

The sergeant began to shake. The heart monitor at the bedside momentarily faltered. The force and fury of an urban firefight erupted in the soldier’s aching chest. “Bones?” he hissed at last. “His bones?!”
The injuries were not life threatening, Powell insisted. No major organs had been penetrated. Given the size and depth of the fragments, he had decided not to pursue the shrapnel at this stage. There were far more desperate patients being operated on in the surgical unit. In the morning Gutteridge would be transported to Landstuhl for recovery. In the meantime, the suicide bomber’s remains would be left in situ.

Gutteridge seethed at this. “No!” he screamed as he clawed violently at his chest, his shrill voice rising above the din of the unit. “You’re not shipping me to Germany with that bastard inside of me!”

Reaching out, he tore the x-ray from the doctor’s hand. In an instant it was on the floor. Gutteridge stared at Powell for a moment and then sat upright and spat on the fallen radiograph.

The tirade was interrupted when one of the nurses stepped out from behind the curtain to approach Powell. She handed over a stat sheet. “Private Fitzpatrick,” she said quietly.

Powell understood at once, turning to see a gurney waiting for him nearby. It bore an inhuman shape draped in a blood-drenched sheet. When he had operated on Fitzpatrick more than an hour ago the army private had been in extremis, torn in two by a rocket-propelled grenade blast injury that had amputated his right leg at the hip and left a gaping pelvic wound. His pelvis had been shattered, his bladder and intestines had been in scraps.

Before Powell could reflect on the loss, a desperate hand grabbed him roughly by his shirt and hauled him forward, sending his glasses clattering to the floor. He found himself face-to-face with the raving Gutteridge. “You’re going to operate,” Gutteridge growled, his breath blowing hot on the surgeon’s face. “You’re going to get these things out of me. You’re going to get him out of me.”
Staring into his wild eyes, Powell caught a familiar glint. It was not the rage or the fury each soldier bore after engaging ruthless rebels and bloodthirsty jihadists. It was fear. Though he had never felt the bite of a bullet or the heat of an exploding mine, Powell knew something of fear. Even amid the world’s bloodiest war zone, the operating theater was more fearful than the battlefield. Gutteridge was now learning that there was nothing more terrifying than the foreign body within.

With Gutteridge still clutching desperately at the surgeon’s uniform, Powell reached out in a flash to grasp the marine by the back of the neck. They held each other in a dreadful deadlock. “Look at him,” Powell said sternly, forcing Gutteridge to look upon the shrouded corpse at the foot of the bed. “Look at him! Two hours we fought for him in surgery. Now he’s dead. But not you.”

Powell felt Gutteridge’s grip falter, felt his shirt go slack, but he held fast to the other man’s neck. “I’m sorry, Sergeant,” he pressed on, “but the shrapnel will heal. You’re safe. And you’re intact. And you’re alive. Don’t forget that this is something to fight for.”

When Powell saw recognition flicker in the soldier’s eyes, when he felt that sick fusion of fear and fury ebb, he let his sweat-slicked hand slip away from Gutteridge’s neck. The other man fell back against the bed and breathed deeply. “Alive,” he agreed after a moment, and when next his trembling hand moved across the wounds on his chest it was gentle and slow.

Each and every soldier who passed through the 31st C.S.H. would bear the scars of this place, and each would have to come to terms with those insurgents who struck from the inside out. Though Gutteridge was being taken out of the war, the battle was a part of him now, and the fight was just beginning.

The surgeon stood and straightened his coat. Stooping to the floor, he snatched up his glasses and the crumpled x-ray. As he took up the nearby gurney and removed the body of the fallen private, he took with him that grim portrait of the insurgency within.
PHILADELPHIA TO WHITE PLAINS

Randy Laist

In movies, the fuselage always cracks open.

In Alive, in Fight Club, in The Gray
One second
Everyone is safely contained in their silver tube
And the next second
The tube opens out into the windy sky.

Men and women, still safety-belted into their seats
Flip head over heels out into the night
Clutching the armrests
Faces frozen in screams beyond the range of human hearing
Their hair ecstatic, aflame
As if their souls were being clutched
And shaken by the fist of God.

Is that what I will do?
Is that what my wife and the baby in her arms will do
When this tin can is finally ripped apart by the surface winds?
At least Tony, being a lap baby
And so not strapped into any chair,
Will be sucked out into space with some modicum of dignity.
Still, it is grim prospect for a cute little baby
So used to the warmth of his mother’s body
To be hurled out into the void
To waft with the currents of pollen
The airborne larvae, the ballooning spiders, and other aerial plankton.
But Tony is as serene as a discount Buddha statuette
The vomitous risings, the breath-stealing craterings
The squeak of rivets, the shivering of plastic panels
And the fear And the fear And the fear

That French plane that crashed into the Atlantic
The pilot zigged when he should have zagged
The commuter jet that crashed into Buffalo or thereabouts the weekend I flew to Iowa
The Polish Prime Minister Lynyrd Skynyrd The day the music died

Ann leans forward greenly
I am repeating the mantra I learned from Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?

    om karaṣṭya svāha
    om karaṣṭya svāha
    om karaṣṭya svāha

Even the flight attendant, pretending to be absorbed in a paperback
As they probably train them to pretend to be doing in crisis situations
Is clearly not taking in a single word.

But Tony’s eyelids flutter lightly as he wanders in and out of sleep
Being a baby is his mantra
And dreaming of being a baby

A stoic, a saint, an icon, a god
To be so blissfully cute
In the gnashing jaws of certain death.
A PLACE I LIKE TO CALL HOME

Emilie Peirolo

I stand at my front door and see the grey-and-blue house of the neighbor who had a bitter divorce.

I look to the right and see the end of the cul-de-sac. To the left I see the golden retriever, Jake, that likes to come over and steal my dog’s bones. I head straight down the road. I see the high school with a long row of big yellow buses perfectly lined in front, an equal space between each one. As I walk closer to the end of the street, I can start to hear the noise of traffic on Route 319, and the smell of diesel becomes stronger too. I turn around and look up the street and see the new neighborhood that I have become acquainted with, the street that has my new home, a white-and-black colonial with big pillars on the front porch and a number seven next to the red door on Fox Hill Drive.

I was twelve years old when everything went down and my life changed. I thought this was for the worst, but it ended up being the best. My parents, married for twenty-five years, with six children, decided that this was the end and they were getting a divorce. During the next couple of months my mother was never home, leaving me and my sister stuck at home with my father, a very bitter, sour, prickly man. We learned that my mother was not just going out alone or with the friends, as she claimed, she was going out with another man. After this news, I started to feel a deep resentment towards my mother for leaving my father for this other, strange man. I blamed the divorce on her; it was all her fault. In my little twelve-year-old eyes, the once close-knit family was falling apart. It then came time for me to meet this new man.

It was a cold, dark night in the middle of winter. My mother pulled the car into a commuter parking lot next to a big red van and told my sister and me to get into the van. Upon entering the van I heard some soft classical music on the radio and smelled a strong scent of vanilla in the air. Sitting behind the wheel was this strange man whom I had heard so much about, the man my mother was leaving my father for. He introduced himself as Tim. I said a simple hello and did not speak another word to him for the remainder of the night, which included a movie.
The initial meeting went better than planned because I left feeling a little more at ease with the divorce. Then it came time to go out alone with Tim and my mother—my little sister would not be there to keep the attention away from me. Very anxiously, I agreed to go on a bowling and dinner date with the two of them. The bowling part was fun and the dinner date was where I really put Tim to the test. I showed him who I really was with my attitude and mannerism. I remember we went to a Chinese buffet for dinner and for dessert I had Jell-O. I, however, did not simply eat the Jell-O. I sucked it through a straw, making a very loud and obnoxious slurping noise. Later, I was sorry for doing this. He thought I was acting very immature for my age. He also thought that I was an embarrassment to him and my mother.

The next morning I received a very bad licking from my mother. I was scolded for my behavior that night. This is when I decided that I did not like Tim and never wanted to see his face again. I remember telling my mother that if I ever saw him again, I would spit on him. My mother said that was fine and that I could have my own thoughts and could feel the way I want, but she told me I could never keep her from seeing and loving Tim. I was feeling very strongly about this new relationship, so it was given a break. There was no talk or dates with Tim until one very snowy day.

School had been cancelled because there was about a foot of snow on the ground and it was still coming down hard. My mom stayed home that day but was texting on her phone constantly. Knowing who she was texting, I asked her if she could teach me how to text. She agreed. Her one rule: I could only text Tim. This is when everything changed. I found out who Tim really was and he found out who I really was, as a person and as a twelve year old lacking a true father figure in my life.

It was just a short few months after those hours of texting that my little sister, my mom, and I all moved into a small one-floor house in the tiny town of Wales, Massachusetts. This was a life-changing experience. It was away from my hometown of Stafford and away from all the familiar people and their sour thoughts about my parents’ divorce. Over the course of a year living in this house, the four of us grew into a family, and Tim became what I was lacking in my life.

After the year was over, we moved into a house that he had built four years earlier. At first it was a very strange place to me. I never called it home until about a year after living there. But that is not what mattered to me. I had a roof over my head, food in my stomach, and a new family. Tim and I became very close, so close that I began to call him Dad. I told him everything, every little detail about my life. It was so exhilarating to have a real dad in my life, someone who cared about me and showed affection and love for his daughter. He filled a void that I had in my heart ever since I was that vulnerable twelve-year-old girl. He taught me lessons that I will teach my own children one day. Tim was a blessing to me and my mother.

I start to walk back up the street towards house number seven, passing numbers one through six. As I approach, I can see my black lab sitting on the crisp, green front lawn. I stand at the front of a white-and-black colonial home with big pillars on the front porch, the house with the big number seven next to the red door on Fox Hill Drive. This is a place I like to call home, a place where many new memories were made with my new Dad.
Wind memories arrived, surrounded
by the dark veil.
They are still alive
and start to escape.

He dances, he breathes, he moves
and feels through the darkness, speechless...
Carrying on his chest with pride and pain
the hundred hidden lyrics he used to pray.

Flawless, on the sea, close to the land
finds what is lost between these sheets
before they reach the sand!

Rests on his back, farewell to the land,
swallowing the breeze and guessing the stars.
Laying far away on the warm calm sea,
he climbs up high, reaching what the rest can only perceive.

Sleeping warrior, emerald sea,
engrave your soul with undefeated lyrics,
Caribbean journeys are still to be felt.
Now, unfold your wings and rest a bit!
Afraid of the dark…
Afraid I couldn’t find my way
Afraid of the dark was I.

So blinded by worry and self-doubt…
I could not see
Self-doubt blinding life’s path.

But all has changed since I was given the road map of self…
An ever twisting and turning path reminding me of who I truly am
An intelligent, passionate, fearless woman who has found her own.

The scars of my mastectomy are not but marks of the surgeon upon my body…
But a treasure map leading to inner strength and growth
The gifted path to my inner self.

With great joy consuming my being no longer stumbling blindly in the dark…
But shining in self-worth and inner peace am I
An iridescent find of courage and confidence in following the road map of self have I.
And so the seed it drops and goes
To and fro to where the wind blows
Past the dry dust
Under branches
And along boggy furrows
Only the seed knows
Where to call home
And so the seed it goes and goes
Until one day the seed slowly slows
Into warm rich soil
Where it finally burrows
And plants its roots
Into spaces and hollows
Building a foundation
Into the depths below
And there the seed it begins to grow
Knowing only what a seed can know
When its stalks of green will show
And praise the sun with its bright glow
But wilts when water does not flow
For it has needs
The seed does owe
Yet once it gathers what it needs to grow
It yields beauty in all colors of the rainbow
Gathering smiles and looks
With oohs and aahs and ohs
What a pretty plant the seed does show
You do not have the right, oh Heroin, to rob me,  
I did not choose you, I did not invite you!  
You are taking my money, my peaceful sleep, my heart.  
You toy with the ones I love.  
My sons will not find who they are, who they are meant to be.  
Who could love them with you around?  
Get thee behind my sons, oh wicked devil.  
You don’t come in without an invite, you don’t leave without an exorcism.  
Why is this nightmare part of my life? Because I love my sons.  
Why am I the only one with fight? Because I love my sons.  
Why do you always win? Because he loves you!  
Am I in the way?  
A nuisance to your love affair?  
Wicked serpent that sneaks up and twists its way around and into my boy,  
I cannot pull you off, I can’t help him free.  
I keep him fed and clothed with a roof over his head, while you suffocate him. While I watch.  
He is in your grips surrounded by others like him. They say no worries, it’s cool, we got it.  
The dead in yours lie behind me, in my memories of dead friends and family,  
Not enough carnage for them to believe the danger they’re in.  
Your sweet lie intoxicates thoughts and leaves them needing you more than life.  
Scatter their babies to others who don’t know you. Blow up the bonds of family. You mean leviathan!  
Take so all we have is a picture of a memory, of our hopes and dreams of a handsome boy with talent you  
Lied to before he had strength. There is only God who is stronger— It will not be a mother who slays  
God and a boy will slay you, maybe my boy—
SISTA GIRL

First Place Winner
2012 Goodwin College Poetry Contest

Sista girl, I know it hurt

The way he made you feel like dirt.
When he walked out with her or him,
When you’re alone and prospects dim.
Little men with big pimp dreams,
Playin’ games with nightmare themes.
Schemin’ hard to steal your thunder,
Beat you down and drag you under.
Hold your head high and claim your glory.
Girl march on; write your own story.
Tina, Oprah, Maya Angelou,
Survived and blazed a trail for you.
Yes, you can step on your own,
And know you’ll never walk alone.
When you tread down your darkest road,
Some sista somewhere will share your load,
Who knows just what you’re goin’ through,
Cause chances are she’s been there too.
Crushed and shattered on the floor,
Guts twisted from the pain she bore.
Tears deep enough to sink a ship,
But she survived and shook its grip.
Girls, you stand on strong broad shoulders,
Of women with ovaries big like boulders.
Yes, I love men and so do you,
But damn, sometimes the things they do.
The pain they cause, their crimes, their drama,
Send you runnin’ home and screamin’ mama.
Sometimes the pain caused by that brother
Makes us want to hurt each other.
Girls, don’t be hatin’ on your sistas,
You might need her to fight them mistas
Up off your ass and out your face,
To move beyond shame and disgrace,
Or just to help pick up yo face.
Sometimes to get where you must go,
Only a woman can help you stand and grow
And tell you all you need to know
So you can run your own damn show.
Among the many wonders of this world
Is the beauty and strength in every girl.
Remember, you stand on strong broad shoulders,
Of women with ovaries big like boulders.
Women who’ve gone to great extremes,
Overcome their pain and fulfilled their dreams.
She rose from every walk of life
To inspire you each day to fight.
Be strong and wise and you’ll do good
And stay down for the sista hood.
Stuck inside a room of lies,
I am pinned with angry flies,
The stench of equivocators in full bloom,
When stuck inside this crowded room.

The hypocrisy is pollinating,
The stifling sense of placating,
The false sense of security,
Make it hard to find purity.

Will the masks ever just drop?
Will the lies ever just stop?
True forms are wonderful,
So why isn’t everyone beautiful?

Superficial looks don’t matter,
These flies and lies should just scatter,
Beauty at its basic form,
Starts as the ugliest worm.
Summer love… And the magic you bring
Blew through from spring
So surprising
Rising
Enjoying these things, oh and ain’t life a gas
Going nowhere fast
But good things don’t last
Well, that’s what wise men say
But who cares about wise men
When I have time to spend with you
Today
Have you ever been in love on a spring afternoon?
With your head in the clouds, feet in the grass, letting life pass
Hearing the tunes?
Darling, lately I hate the
Rising and setting of
The sun…
It means this day is over and tomorrow has begun
And soon you’ll be gone
And I go through the motions, control the emotions
In my heart
It seems our time is over just when I was ready
To start
Have you ever been in love on a spring afternoon?
With your head in the clouds, feet in the grass, letting life pass
Hearing the tunes?
THE STORM

Jamie Mattos

Wicked clouds came rolling in, the sky grew dark and grey.

Who knew the bridge that we were on would crash and burn that day. A sudden flash, a blinding light, I’m shocked into a spasm. BOOM! I’m hit, a crackling ripple opens up the chasm. Touching down, way too deep, where hot and dark winds blow, A storm unleashed, with deadly force, so well, he’d come to know. Wind grips my feet, currents rise and swirl, whipping around my spine, Illuminating those old wounds I thought I’d lost in time.

Lightning bolts fly from my tongue and drop him to his knees. Sharp words swoosh through violent wind and rip off scabs like leaves. Retorts come raining down in sheets, pounding hard like hail, Covering his head, he furrows deep, and then tucks in his tail. He cannot hide, he can’t escape; oh no, it’s much too late. His mouth released a tidal wave; his words have sealed his fate. In swollen rage, angry clouds loom above and burst. He drew first blood, piercing my soul; I deign to quench his thirst.

As I encroach, a billion volts run crashing through his brain Like hurricanes, eviscerating flesh, and bone, and vein. Blood washed away with all his lies in a vengeful torrent of tears, Laying open the place where I had tried so hard to hide my fears. Scattered on lifeless ground, amongst muddied broken limbs Lay the grimy, cold, and tattered pieces of what was once him. I come to pause, the storm subsides, again the cool winds blow I have landed on the wrong side of yet another rainbow.
THE TASK

Nicole Morales

She stood there, a child of seven, small and defenseless, the target of their angry, screaming voices.

She lowered her head, eyes transfixed on the dirt floor. She watched a roach skirt across the floor and disappear under the sink that still held the remnants of their dinner. The voices around her rose and swelled, becoming a deafening hum.

She desperately wanted to run and hide, to escape the imposing shadows that she saw stretching and advancing toward her on the wall, but she knew that the punishment she would receive if she moved would be one hundred times greater.

Suddenly, the big, burly shadow that frightened her most spoke. Knowing what she was expected to do next, she slowly turned and walked towards the front door.

She stepped out into the cold, crisp darkness. She saw fireflies dancing on the wind, their tiny bodies glowing and pulsating out a language that only they understood, their neon yellow glow complementing the newly formed ecliptic moon.

She approached the big oak tree located on the corner of the front lawn. Sensing that she had arrived at her destination, her body began to tremble uncontrollably. The tears began to well up and burst from her eyes as she began to survey the tree for a branch she could reach.

As if fate were playing a trick on her, she spotted a branch that gravity and time had contorted, consequently bending it just within her reach.

Knowing that they were waiting, she quickly reached up and broke off the branch. The crack the branch made seemed to hang in the night air before rising and disappearing over the tree tops.

Pivoting abruptly, she ran back to the house. At the front door, she stripped the branch of its smaller segments. They fell and collected at her feet. With her task now complete, she carried the branch inside.

"Out of difficulties grow miracles"

—Jean de la Bruyere
Earlier this week, while I was volunteering at a daycare, I was discussing major life issues with a four-year-old girl.

I was trying to explain to her the joys of losing your first tooth and your first visit from the Tooth Fairy. After that statement had left my mouth, she looked me directly in the eyes and said, “Raelene, are you serious? The Tooth Fairy isn’t real; your mom is the one putting money underneath your pillow at night.”

As I looked at her, shocked, I tried to explain how that couldn’t be possible because my mother’s hands are much larger than the Tooth Fairy’s, and I’m sure that she would wake me up. For the next five minutes, this child explained to me how the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny weren’t real. She couldn’t believe that, at twenty years old, I still didn’t know that. Here she was, at four, telling me how the world works.

As I stood there in utter disbelief of the idea that the simple magic of the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny were something that this innocent girl would never get to experience, I wondered if all the magic in the world had been lost.
WAITING FOR THE SUCK... WHUMP!

Eileen Ferris

I’m visualizing as best I can, but I’m still waiting to hear the sibilant suck and feel the almost wistful whump of the door’s opening to let me in.

Suzi, the session leader, keeps intoning, “Visualize the door. See it. Reach out and touch it. Turn the knob. Rattle it if you need to. Make it open. Feel the warmth of your welcome. Visualize the door.”

I’m not new to this process, but it’s not working. In our last session, Suzi shared her images of wild dogs and bronze sculptures. Somehow, she was able to transform them into a story about a trip to Eastern Europe. I tried not to laugh at my own mental picture of her vampire dogs with Smurf blue or Pink Panther pink coats.

Another time, I had my own too vivid visualization experience. We were supposed to find a state of perfect calm and relaxation as we rode an escalator to the top. Unfortunately, my imagined ride was the one leading from floor eleven to twelve in the old G. Fox building—a wide-treaded, narrow-stepped nightmare. I couldn’t sleep for four months after that. At least when we pictured the peaceful in and out of ocean waves, I didn’t re-live being saved by the lifeguard at age eight. The closest experience I could compare that to was being pulled out of the surf at fourteen by a twelve-year-old boy who was teaching me to body surf.

“I am focusing on one of the double glass entry doors to the main building. It is the last one on the left. It is the one I usually use to enter the building. The other door opens easily, but this one is usually locked. I can’t explain this to Suzi because this fact and the other details are all part of what I’m visualizing. The pictures are in my head. The real life doors are about ten miles away. Besides, I can’t open my mouth.”

I want Suzi to help me understand the symbolism behind the doors and why they are so important to me. Why is it that I am only welcome to come and go and work to a limited extent? Am I unqualified to do more? Am I too old to do more? Am I not good at what I do?

“I’m starting to realize the doors I’m looking at might not be the only way in. Maybe I can find a side door.”
New England,
Woods full of whispers beside the Great River.
I can feel them through my skin.
My senses are fused with nature.

Gray air, dense to breath.
It is raining and no birds are singing.
Just brume, gray, and moistened ground,
Breathing underneath my feet, living.

The vulture is searching, screening, smelling,
Looking for a prey, surrounding, waiting...

The warrior is coming.
I can feel him through my skin.
I’m a barefooted witness, fused with nature
And the trees are still dancing his secret rhythm.

He is coming...
He is coming, carrying his shadow across the thickness.
I hear his steps on the soft moss, soaked, I am his witness.
He is moaning to mitigate his ancient pain,
Blaspheming his inner voice of wisdom.

The blood of his people still lies across the ground,
Their souls were stolen by the new spirits.

But he is brave, he is bright,
He is full of wind and iron arms.
He brandishes his axe and begins this silent war.
Timelessly, at the park he perpetuates as a rough cast model,
Killing, in revenge, the misgoverned crowd.
Wilma Long

WEEEPING CHERRY TREE

My mom she weeps for me
at night.
In secret places out of sight.
When no one sees, she cries for me
just like this weeping cherry tree.
But in the light she is strong and bright.
She works for me day and night.
Her strength is there for all to see,
just like the blooms of this cherry tree.
I broke her heart in so many ways,
but I gave her joy that always stays.
Her fruit is her effort for all to see,
just like the cherry of this willow tree.
For T

she bade me get up
and sleepily draw the blinds tighter

dutiful, i obeyed,
and though i knew the daybreak
brought me
closer to my end,
i wondered how much power
she had lost
that she could not summon even
simple darkness.

i lay in her bed,
hoping the old hope of men
that i would be the one to survive
but knowing better—
outside
her window I see
plenty of space for
dozens of me
unmarked unmourned

the white witch walks my city
the place i was born
i ought know better
than to see dawn in her bed
as she tries to conjure a future
from a past she is trying to forget

but she is the white witch
and i am just a slave
who dreams
foolishly
of a future
near such magic

WHITE
WITCH
ODE

A.Q.
Who am I, you inquire?
I am the girl who walks around
in empty parking lots,
looking for a solid purpose.
I am the girl that is drowning more
and more into her own despair each day.
I am the girl that nobody much cares for, the
one people can overlook so easily.
I am that girl you see over there, huddled
in the corner, clutching a book in her hand, tears
streaming effortlessly down her cheeks.
I’m sure you’ve seen me around.
Don’t you see me? I’m right in your line of vision,
dancing outside in the rain, screaming into the
open air, arms out, laughing.
I am the meaning of nothing.
I cringe under your
penetrating gaze, willing you to go away.
It’s strange, though, even as I wish you away
I want you to stay, but I’m not brave enough
to hold a stable conversation with you.
The girl that I am is not one of much excitement
but what does it really matter?
My identity needn’t be discussed anyway.
WHY I PURCHASED A SNOW BLOWER

Kim Scaplen

Storm Nemo had released twenty-four inches of heavy snow in my driveway. Fantastic, I thought. I went outside for a while to start cleaning up the mess. But, after an hour, my back was aching, and I saw my daughters watching me from the living room window, where it was nice and warm. Even though they saw me shoveling, they still poked their heads out to ask what was for breakfast.

“On the menu today is snow,” I hollered.

They got the point. In less than two minutes, although they stomped their feet and whined, they were outside helping. Finally, after hours of shoveling, two frozen children, and a broken shovel, the driveway was finished. While I sat there, I realized that I’m not getting any younger, and the snow will keep on coming.

The next day, I purchased a snow blower. Consequently, my back feels better, and my children will never have to eat snow for breakfast again.
To all of our contributors, our editors, and our readers.

THANK YOU

To be included in the next issue of *The Beacon*, send your submissions to:
TheBeacon@Goodwin.edu

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One Riverside Drive
East Hartford, CT 06118
www.Goodwin.edu
800.889.3282