

WIRE GRASSES

EAST GEORGIA COLLEGE 2010



WIREFRASS

THE EAST GEORGIA COLLEGE LITERARY AND CREATIVE ARTS MAGAZINE

2009-2010



Wiregrass

featuring the writing and artwork of
East Georgia College's academic and continuing
education students, staff, and faculty

EditorAmanda Ely

Assistant Editor.....Kristi Parker

Typing.....Michael Wedincamp

Faculty Advisor S.D. Lavender

Artwork photographed by Desmal Purcell

Thanks to Mark Dallas & Alan Brasher

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Involuntary Consequences

It is 8 PM on a Thursday evening and I feel the seclusion.
 You are across the room as the alien blue glow distorts your features,
 leaving you hollow.
 I hear the faint clicking of the keys as you feverishly type.
 The chill in the air is not initiated by the February frost.

What has confiscated your attention?
 Is it the afterglow of teenage love or the rampage of social networking?
 Or is it just your role as a gear in the war craft machine?
 All of your focus is electronic and mechanical as I fade from your peripheral.

Emails announcing sales, auctions, and free shipping.
 We can buy necessities and never leave our upholstered sanctuary.
 Need more useless information? Go to the site and click on the tab.
 Does man need to be further removed from humanity?

Virtual community programs are calculated to bring the people together
 Yet they seem to push members farther from tangible exchanges.
 Nobody talks in real time any longer.
 Communications are diluted down to abbreviations and emoticons.

Do we really have to distribute all of ourselves with the collective community?
 I do not intend to confirm everyone's friendship.
 What happened to chatting with the neighbors in the flesh?
 I need to hear the noise and imperfection of human connection.

When did anonymity become archaic?
 Should I run through the cyber mall in my neon rainbow camouflage?
 Or lurk in the bottom right corner collecting cookies along the way?
 I think we should all go back to a time of public seclusion.
 But I fear we'll never be able to lock society's secrets back in the closet.
 These are the involuntary consequences of mechanized and computerized advancement.



oil on canvas by Marielle Williams

Vision Series

Music. Sounds. What is this?
 Colorful dresses. Puffy, alongside dark tuxedos.
 Long coats, tails dragging the floor's surface.
 Hand in hand to sounds soothing!
 Me—you, us. At last. Together at once.

Strange? No eyes, only ears left with visions.
 The eye alone bleeds to the picture the ear paints.
 No blood. But unbearable?
 Because the eye can't see what the ear can read.
 Benches! One man. Two man. Triangle form.
 He talks to himself as the auditorium mourns.
 Sweet Music. Sleep music? Possibly so!
 But the eyes can't read what the ears already know.
 Red fish, blue fish. Who's that? Where's this?
 Instrument. What kind? Violin. Tuba. Or maybe
 A trumpet that shines.
 Red fish, blue fish. One of a kind.
 This may be poetry but of what sort? What kind?
 Tones, sounds, thoughts I wonder? I wander.
 Who's next to who? Is there any room?
 For me—to you.
 That I don't know. But I do see this
 Red fish, blue fish triangle form.
 He talks to himself as the auditorium mourns.

---Sir Rainey



graphite by Laura Christine Connors

I Give

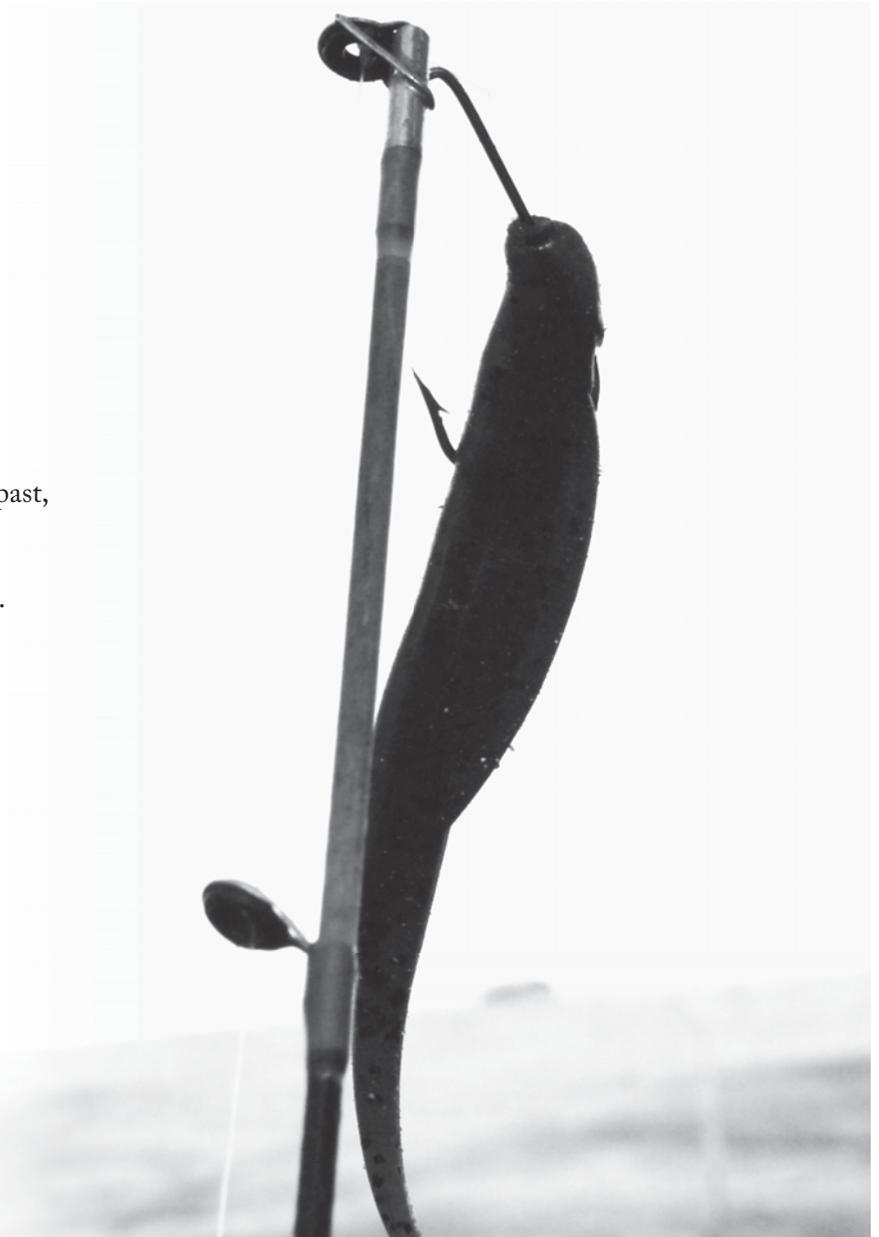
I give and they take.
 I love and they hate.
 I share and they steal.
 I scar and they heal.
 I stay and they go.
 I assume they know
 That I live, though it burns.
 Sometimes I cry, but always I learn.

---Jessica Driggers

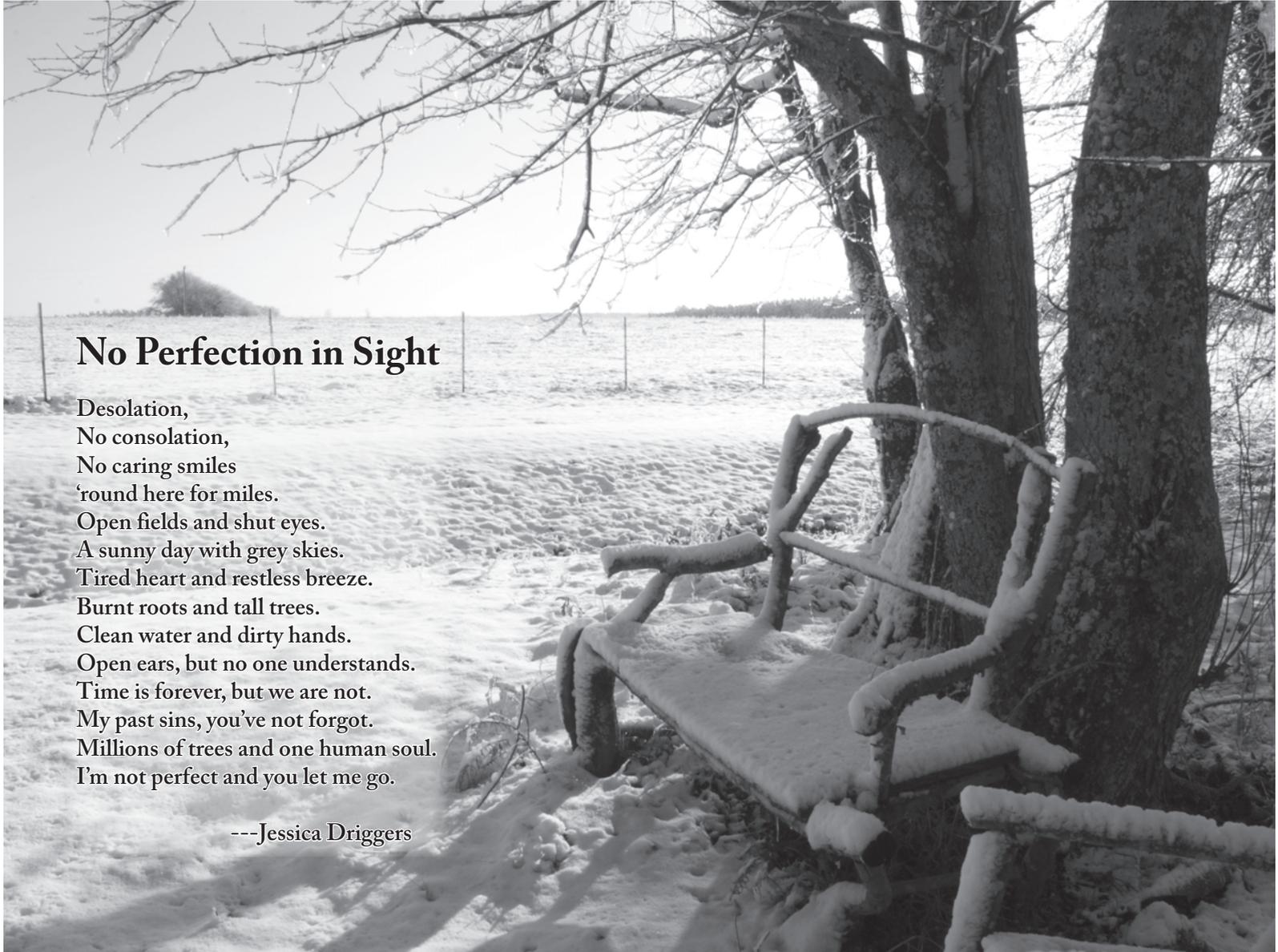
To My Beloved

Our chance encounter, though great, will never do.
Far are the lengths many go to be with you,
And though our acquaintance is now gone and long past,
The essence of those memories will forevermore last.
Though tomorrow is now gone, today starts anew.
And though winter is here, I will always think of you.
Your gleam and your shine; the way that you bend
Distracts me more than I care to pretend.
Spring is nearly here. You will again be my soul.
Long is winter—I miss you, my dear fishing pole.

---Michael Owen Henry



photograph by Lisa Keyton



No Perfection in Sight

Desolation,
No consolation,
No caring smiles
'round here for miles.
Open fields and shut eyes.
A sunny day with grey skies.
Tired heart and restless breeze.
Burnt roots and tall trees.
Clean water and dirty hands.
Open ears, but no one understands.
Time is forever, but we are not.
My past sins, you've not forgot.
Millions of trees and one human soul.
I'm not perfect and you let me go.

---Jessica Driggers

Heartbreak

by Joseph Johnson

Seth found his way home on a cold November night, waiting on another woman to dull the pain that plagued him, but sitting on his couch was the very woman responsible for that pain: Cynthia—her eyes a bright, heart melting blue, her hair the color of the sunset. She wore a very tight sweater.

Seth hung up his jacket, then turned to her. “Why are you here?”

“You loved me once,” she said. “Don’t you remember?”

“That’s past.”

Cynthia patted the place next to her. “Come and talk to me, please.” Seth didn’t move. “Perteneceamos juntos,” She added, smiling. Seth knew what she was saying because he’d once said it to her.

Back in Seth’s senior year in high school, all was going well, and when he saw Cynthia, he knew it would be even better. She sat in front of him in Spanish class and seemed to be trying her hardest to fail. One day, the teacher, a beast of a woman who had it in for pretty girls, called on Cynthia, knowing full well she didn’t know the answer, so Seth leaned forward and whispered it into her pink little ear, saving her from certain embarrassment. After class, Cynthia hurried after him and thanked him. Seth couldn’t think of anything to say to such a magnificent creature, so he just stood there smiling like a crazed rabbit. Eventually, realizing that conversation was not imminent, Cynthia turned and started to walk away. In a panic he called out to her, “Perteneceamos juntos.”

“What does that mean?”

“I can’t tell you right now,” he replied, “but maybe you can ask me again over dinner.”

Now, beside him on the couch, she said, “You never told me what it meant.” Seth looked into the fire his wife had started and answered, “We belong together.”

Then he remembered, and when his eyes darted to the door, Cynthia asked, “Are you expecting a woman?” Deciding that the telling the truth would be best, and because she was sure to know anyway, he answered, “Yes.”

She closed her eyes and nodded. “I hope it’s the blonde from your office. I always liked her.”

Seth gritted his teeth and hit the arm of the couch with his fist. “I can’t do this any more. I love you, but you’re killing me inside.”

Cynthia leaned into him. “I can’t help what happened,” she said, “but I can’t leave until you truly want me to.”

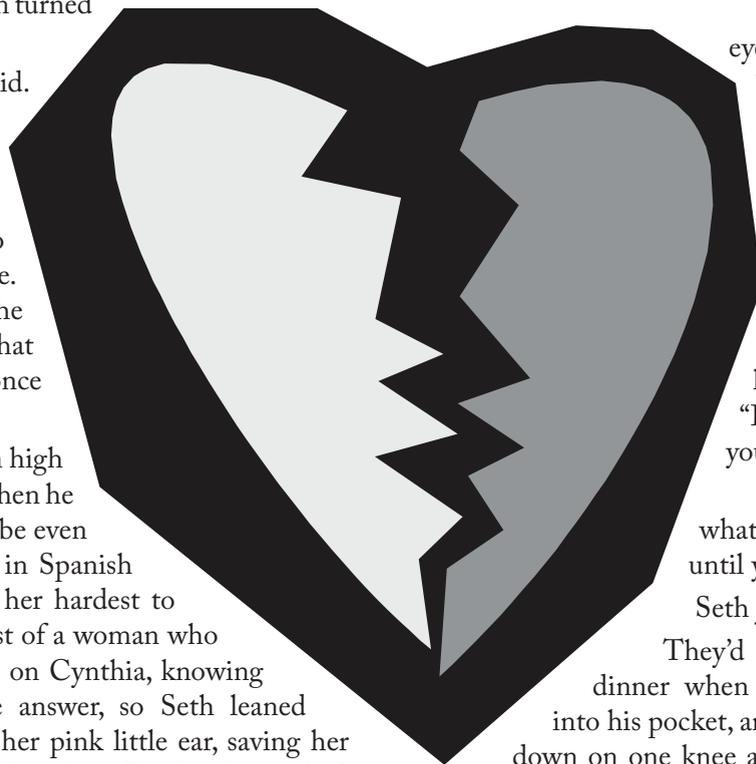
Seth jumped up, crying, “You promised me!”

They’d been walking through the park after dinner when Seth had suddenly stopped, reached into his pocket, and pulled out a small velvet box. He got down on one knee and in the midst of the fall breeze and moonlit trees, he proposed to her.

“Yes!” she squealed, and they embraced.

Holding her tightly and breathing in her sweet scent, a sudden dread crept into his mind. “Promise me something,” he said.

“Anything.”



“Promise me you’ll never break my heart.”

She squeezed him and said, “I will never break your heart.”

But now she was in his life again, watching as he suffered, asking him, “Where’s your ring?”

“I don’t know,” he lied. “I haven’t worn it since that night two years ago.”

He knew where the ring was, but the thought of wearing it again made his heart feel like it was splitting.

Cynthia walked toward Seth’s CD collection, selected one and slipped it in the player. “No. Please,” he cried, but she ignored him and began swaying to the music.

Two years ago, on their first anniversary, Cynthia had leaned on Seth’s shoulder while they danced to the house band’s slow song, “Love Sick.” They felt more in love than ever at that restaurant, and never wanted it to end. They looked into each other’s eyes, remembering every second of their relationship. The song ended and they decided to leave and go where they could be alone. When they got to their car, they embraced and kissed. When they finally released, there stood a man in a hooded jacket with a gun in his hand. He shouted threats and demanded Seth’s keys and money. Cynthia cried out, then clutched her heart. Before Seth could catch her, she fell to the ground. The

hooded man ran. Seth screamed for help. Others came to his aid. Someone called for an ambulance. Before Seth could clearly grasp what had happened, the paramedics had arrived, checked for a pulse, covered the body with a sheet, and driven away. He screamed out in pain.

A knock on the door brought him back into the present, standing beside the CD player, holding the house band’s album in his hand. The knock came again, so he put down the CD and opened the door. A blonde woman stood in the doorway. “Hi,” she said. “Sorry I’m late.”

Seth stared right through her. “You have to go.”

“Is everything okay?”

“Go home to your husband.”

The woman stood in the doorway, stunned, but eventually drove off, leaving Seth to his misery. He turned, hopeful that the reunion was not cut short by the woman’s interruption, but he found nothing but a fire and a soft love song playing. He went to his desk, opened the top drawer, and pulled out a small velvet box. He opened it and there was the ring, just where he’d left it. Putting it on, he wiped the tears from his eyes and muttered, “Perteneceamos juntos. Happy Anniversary, Baby.”



pastel by Kristin Kyser



oil on bristol board by Marielle Williams

April is Walking

April is walking,
 sauntering
 on clouds of pollen.
 The yellow settles
 on our feet, and the
 days are stretching lazily
 like lizards in the sun.
 Nothing matters except
 the curve of the soft shoulder
 on this leafy country road,
 slowly winding,
 meandering
 upwards
 to the cliffs of memory.

--- Jacquie Brasher

The Beautiful Vegetable Field

The beautiful vegetable field
 That looks like braids or cornrows
 Between the crosses, row on row,
 That mark the place they grow, grow, grow.
 The beautiful vegetable field.

The beautiful vegetable field
 Where we live and our bodies are healed.
 It makes you reveal.
 Then we are sealed.
 The beautiful vegetable field.

---Quala Young

One of the Best

You are a boy in the third grade with an early writing assignment,
 And you knew it wasn't very good,
 But you laid it on the teacher's desk,
 And the teacher didn't notice
 And you were satisfied
 Because he didn't see it come in, he didn't comment on it
 And the next day was open house
 And you were called on to read what the teacher remembered was one of the best papers



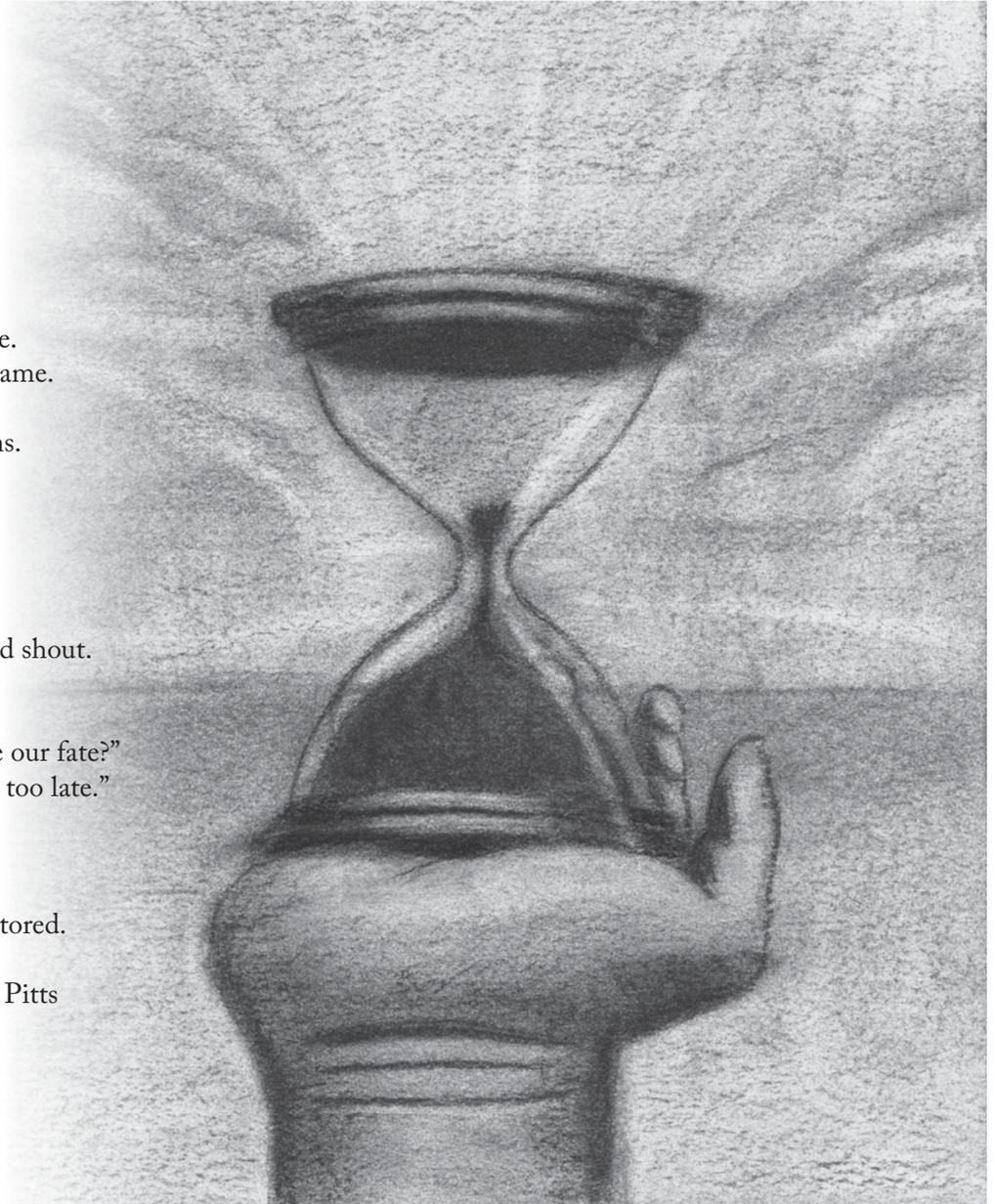
And it was too late
 And you couldn't get out of it
 And you couldn't do better
 And you read your paper
 And parents laughed nervously and the other students laughed nervously
 But the teacher didn't laugh.
 He just said, "Oh, I guess that wasn't one of the best."

---Bob Marsh

Time Is Running Out

I walk around with a smile on my face,
 Hiding the fact that I don't belong in this place.
 They ask me where I'm from and what's my name.
 I simply tell them that my father is the reason I came.
 They question my intentions.
 I firmly state that it's time to make some decisions.
 "The Son will be returning soon.
 Maybe as early as this afternoon."
 They laughed and mocked me,
 All together chanting, "You're crazy."
 "No, listen! Time is running out."
 The more I tried to explain, the louder they would shout.
 The ground began to shake and rumble.
 Their laughing ceased as some began to stumble.
 They questioned frantically, "How can we change our fate?"
 "You should have listened earlier, for now it is far too late."
 The Lord then appeared before us.
 Each one waited for his judgment to discuss.
 Shaking and trembling they each faced the Lord
 In the fiery furnace is where their souls are now stored.

---Paris Pitts



charcoal by Jon Luke

Billy Holiday/Lady Day

by Amanda Ely



Sometimes I come visit you here, when I'm in town. Oh, I know I didn't say hello, but the band played such a lovely song (bittersweet, but so familiar) I just wanted to sit quietly and listen. I watched you wipe down the bar and sling the white towel over your shoulder and smile at the ladies. The sound of their laughter with the clink of glasses and rustle of skirts (do you know what heaven sounds like?) was almost divine. I used to laugh too— can you even remember it? Well, I do apologize for scribbling all this on a cocktail napkin, but you know I'm no good at letter writing. Darling please don't be angry with me for leaving again. I'll send you a postcard from happiness when I get there.

Love=Tragedy

The fairy tale ending, the perfect romance,
the protective hold, the true love's kiss,
The heart's soul-mate, the "other half,"
the still-warm hand, the engraved memory,
The never-ending, always pending, lovely, timeless story—
Was only a delusion.
Love...tragedy's most gifted, appalling glory.

---Brittany Horton

Such a woman. Such a regrettable, enchanting woman. He crumpled the napkin and jabbed it into his trouser pocket. He had been waiting for her, patiently. She is gone again. Gone. She will never be mine. He rolled his white cuffs down and ran his fingers through his gleaming hair. He could have any woman he wanted—to be sure they were plenty, and easy, too. But he only wanted her. If only she wanted the same. I won't be put in a dreadful cage, darling. Please understand, she had said. He sat down heavily. He did remember her laugh. It was the sound of fresh rain on leaves in the morning, not the lifeless sounds of glass and alcohol. If you had any jealousy at all, I wish you'd have it for me. He sighed bitterly. She might find her happiness, but it wouldn't be with him.

Touch of fire, kiss of wind.
Fan the flames and the two lives blend.
Hearts intertwine when love takes hold;
Love lights the eyes of lovers bold.
Who can tell this mystery's end?
How hearts and minds and lives are wed?
Sealed with a kiss.
Bound by a ring.
This is the most mysterious thing.

---Cerisse Ortiz

How Deep Is Your Love?

It is as deep as the crystal blue ocean below your feet,
As wide as the sandy white beaches that run beside it,
As high as the farthest star twinkling on a moonlit night,
And where that ends, is where my love begins.

---Tammy Patton

Birthdays in Las Vegas

If he didn't get married, he thought
 He'd spend his birthdays in Las Vegas.
 He'd stand at the Hoover's rim
 And stare down the cement cliff
 Then out into the neon horizon.
 He'd inhale the clean slate of desert air
 Unmugged, of a talcum scent.

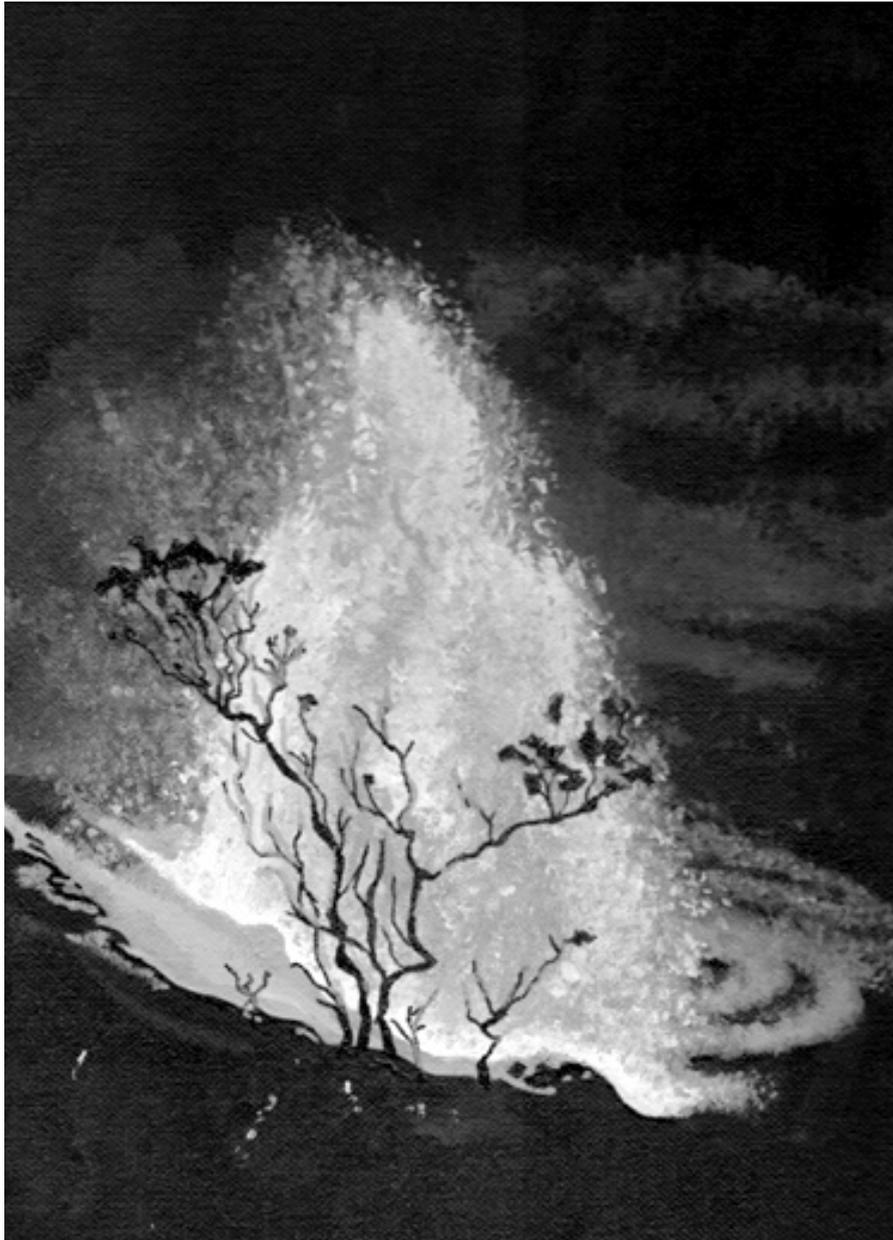
But then he saw her through the window
 And unable to touch her light, it started—
 The tension of convincing,
 Of doing right,
 Of having kids,
 Five boys to become men
 And keep his silence in their distant dreaming.

Until one summer night,
 He called them out
 To where he sat on a folding chair
 The whites of his eyes and dentures glowing
 As the moths fluttered then popped
 In the bug zapper's fluorescent light.
 Turning to them briefly, he said,
 "Watch this. Those stupid moths
 can't learn from their dead."

---Deanna Ryan



photo by Sammy Hall



acrylic by Laura Christine Conners

Cave Canem

A simple warning,
 A sharp stick formed the words on a small clay plaque.
 Nearby a cast of the dog writhes in Hellenistic agony—
 Much like the sons of Laocoon—
 Mundane artifacts found in a city entombed by ash.

Did the dog sense the end
 As the ash fell like acrid grey snow?
 Tied to a post he could make no escape
 As those who could escape
 Felt the premonitory rumble,
 Saw the fiery crest.
 And the spreading dark plume in the sky.
 The auguries were present
 In the stirring of the beasts.
 And the trembling of the household gods.

Some escaped; others could not,
 Chained by the banal
 Or frozen by small fears.
 The ash was no respecter of property or small signs,
 No respecter of man or dog.
 The ash covered all,
 The dog tethered by a man,
 The unlucky tethered by things.

---Kenneth Homer

The Autumn Hunt

The last in the hunt on this cold November
Has coursed past the distant baying hounds,
Far from the broils of the chase and the sounds
Of the pack, twisting and turning to wend a way,
Favored by chance and the courage to seize the prize,
Running through susurrus leaves in the woods
And fired by bloodlust to catch the quarry which stood
Quiet in surrender, defeat filming the eyes.

The strongest has distanced the rest of the pack, a band
In common pursuit of the wily prey.
All the tracks are now faint in the sand,
And one stands alone on this crisp autumn day.
Soon all the hunt will be home to the Hill.
Winner, head home to the clamoring throng.

---Kenneth Homer



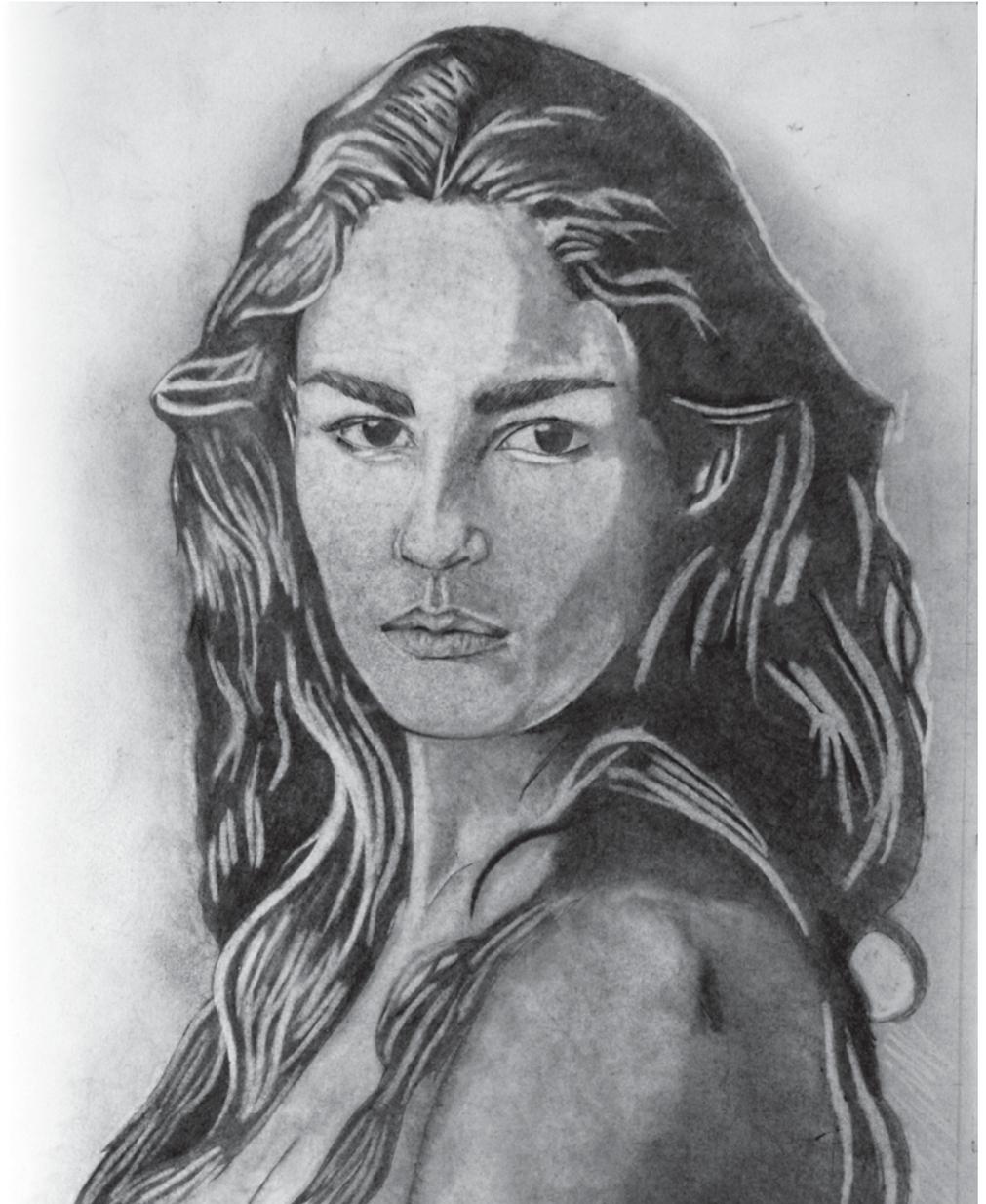
digital photography by Sammy Hall

FIRST PRIZE

A Diamond of Many Facets

She is a diamond of many facets,
A meandering lake with many turns,
A volcano that can level the Earth,
The obsidian left after the burns,
A pricking rose thorn refusing to quit,
The pistil that for any man's heart yearns,
The cold stone used to build the family hearth,
The warmth that a cozy fire returns,
The rough hands that weave so many baskets,
The sunshine needed to grow lovely ferns,
The shipwreck at the bottom of the firth,
But all the treasures that the diver earns,
Her blemishes, if you can look past it,
She is a diamond of many facets.

---Chris Blackburn



charcoal by Alexander McIntosh

The Eighth Annual Emily Pestana-Mason Memorial Poetry Contest

This is the eighth year of the poetry contest to honor the memory of Dr. Emily Pestana-Mason, poet and former English professor at East Georgia College. This year's contest judge is Dr. Laura Milner, professor in the Department of Writing and Linguistics at Georgia Southern University and co-founder of The Evening Muse, a handful of Statesboro writers hosting community-based open-mic poetry readings since 2000. Dr. Milner selected Chris Blackburn's "A Diamond of Many Facets" as this year's First Prize winner, "a sonnet packed with paradox and metaphor, laced with sensory images as contradictory as the complex woman they attempt to elucidate." Winning Second and Third Place, respectively, are "For the Dippy (a redneck love story)" by Jonathan Allen Tillery and Jared Luke Peacock (on page 20), and "Roses in My Hands" by India Price. Though vastly different in tone, language, and form, the finalists describe romantic relationships found, lost, and potentially found again.

Roses in My Hands

I found peace inside a flower-scented box of tissues
Where my dolorous sorrows were tucked away neatly.
All around me I feel spectators' gratitude lounging into
my welcomes.
I'm struck with stillness as they calm me with
sympathies and cold hugs.

Physically, I'm being held up from the hope feeling apathy.
Once you owned me with your dying eyes and soft lips.
I was perfect living in your eyes.
Yes! Perfectly consumed with glee twirling in the palm
of your hand

I'm swept away into memories when we lived inside each
other,
When we lived in moments of happily ever after.

THIRD PLACE

Now my heart has blackened,
ashamed to pump red through my veins and into your eyes.
Bitterness has dried up the old kisses you left on my cheek,
along with the hugs that have kept warmth on my body.

I watch, wickedly pretending to be content.
Petal by petal. Red roses withered with grief fall onto your
hands.

I whisper the sweetest promise that's effortless
To catch your heart and hold it inside mine.

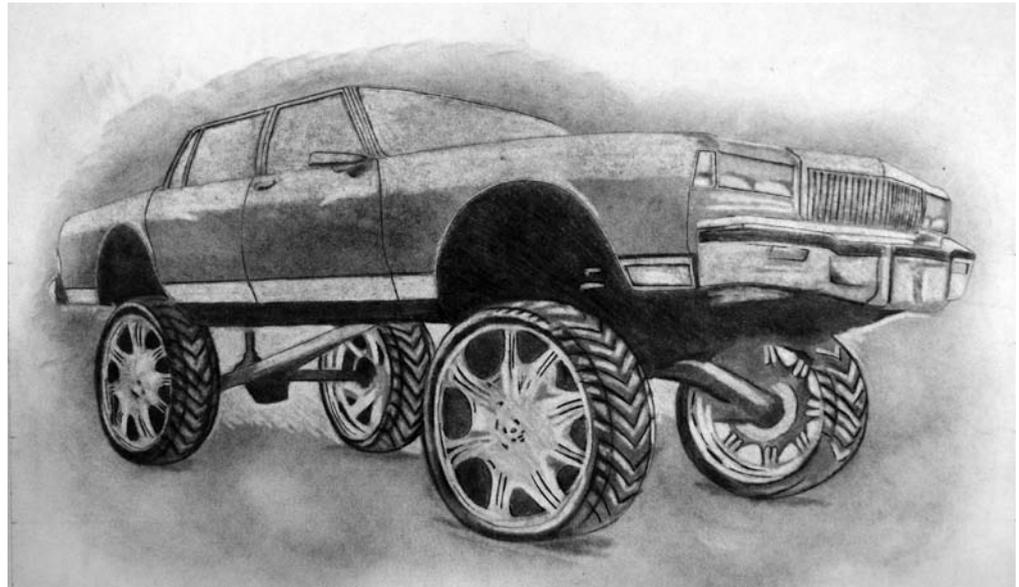
--- India Price

SECOND PLACE

For The Dippy (a redneck love story)

Grizzly in my lip.
Shotgun on my hip.
Nothing could compare to that feeling.
When I'd come home,
She'd go on and on
About them grains in my teeth,
And then the thought crossed my mind.
Should I dump her for the dippy?
Our relationship constantly slipping.
It's either her or the Grizzly.
Just wait til the decision is clear and easy.

Sitting in my deer stand
With my woman.
Everything is great until
I slip that dippy
Into my lippy.
She slaps my cheek,
And as I watch
All that sweet tobaccer trickle to the
ground,
I know it is time,
So I dump her for the dippy.
Our relationship is constantly slipping.
She said it was either her or the Grizzly.
And that made my decision easy.
I dumped her for the dippy.



charcoal by Alexancer McIntosh

Slept last night with one eye open
Fixed an omelette early that mornin'
And as I prepared for an onset
Something seemed amiss
I needed one more kiss
 But I had dumped her for the dippy
 And then it hit me
 I thought I had it all
 But big Grizzly had me in his paws
So, I dumped my can of dippy
Called up my baby
The telephone started ringing and ringing
 and ringing
And then a man answered her phone.

---Jonathan Allen Tillery
and Jared Luke Peacock

Woe is me
To pay the fee
61 in a 45
Damn man, I can't hide.
License and insurance please
Brings me down to my knees
Looking up into his face
Full of shame, full of disgrace
Begging for a small reprieve.
Can you give me a warning please?
A look of satisfaction on his face.
Not this time. Not this place.

---Kim Adams

Watson Street, Swainsboro

For Will

Tuesdays took me there, as naturally
as if this were my hometown, as if
the aroma of Dominican cigars and Turkish
Latakia could shape a path between distant

neighborhoods. Conversation was the real
draw, but tobacco—and the slow round
of single malt that surely followed—gave
the occasion. It was intellectual, as we planned

a class in romanticism; spiritual, when Will
reflected on administering last rites and gave
me one of his prayer books; friendship,
when we laughed over the splitting of a tin

of Penzance, that would have looked, to all
the world, like a run-of-the mill drug deal,
complete with cutting of portions and plastic
baggy. Sometime after he left, I complained

that, had he stayed, he would have become my
mentor. He suggested that he still could be.

---Alan Brasher

Tanner Park

The heron gray
with tubed neck arching
conducts his slim, sharp beak
to the center of the pond
where a broken fountain leans
endlessly to its left.
Twig legs lift and drag three toes
that barely crack
the water's brown surface
into a ripple.
He plods the shallow-edged path
until bubbles small and gathering
around a sunken barrel
bring him to a halt.
Toes slide beneath the mud and algae
until each limb a pillar turns.

Could I but wait as the heron waits
for fish to be fed;
to be fed, could I but wait
as the heron waits?

Yet now his head turns and he stretches on
for no fish swims close enough to swallow.

---Deanna Ryan



pastel by Kristin Kyser

Every year thousands of young people graduate from high school and either go on to college or immediately enter the workforce. Unfortunately, there are also thousands who simply refuse to apply themselves and may very well end up in prison; therefore, it is important for these folks to learn lock-up lingo, big house banter, slammer slang—in other words

they need to learn a whole new way of speaking. The conversation that follows was secretly recorded at one of our fine correctional facilities. Observe how a certain inmate embarrasses himself when he slips and forgets to use---

Prison Parlance

by S.D. Lavender

Boots: That Five O (correctional officer) is a real shark (a guard who abuses prisoners). Yeah. He pencil whipped me (wrote a report on me) for skating (being in an off-limits area).

Leroy: You catch a beef (a disciplinarian charge)?

Boots: Yeah. I got red-tagged (confined to a cell) for two days.

Leroy: That's a dope fiend move (a sleazy maneuver). That's why you got to work the corners (build relationships) and get that juice card (privileges) and be a Viking (live the good life).

Boots: He needs to get dressed out (assaulted with urine or feces).

Leroy: You're acting like a three snap case (an individual likely to go berserk at any given moment). You're ready to bust a grape (become violent). What are you swole (unhappy) about? Oh, I know. It's your strawberry (girlfriend).

Boots: On my skin (I swear to God). Soon as I hit the bricks (am released), that Sancho (a man who dates a woman while her man is in prison) better catch a square (get ready to fight). He's One Eighty Six (marked for death).

Leroy: Aww, you're selling wolf tickets (speaking aggressively

without intending to back it up with violence) You don't want your next bit (prison sentence) to be all day (life without parole), do you? All you got to do is put on your bonaroods (best clothes) and find you a real Ma (woman). Speaking of appearances, the reason I came to see you is I'm getting such a tummy. I really need to start running. Do you have any bo-bo's (tennis shoes) I can borrow?

Boots: No, but I got some Tally Ho (rubber cement found in prison shoes). Let's go to the blind (an area where correctional officers can't see) and huff (inhale).

Leroy: Honestly, Boots. You're impossible. You know I don't do drugs any more. I need you to be a little more supportive.

Boots: What kind of yang (foreign language) is that?

Leroy: You heard me, you...you...spider monkey (someone doing hard time, climbing the walls).

Boots: Your talking out the side of your neck (speaking unreliably).

As you can see, even an inmate who is certainly not a fish (a new arrival) can sometimes commit a silly faux pas. So always remember your---

Prison Parlance



charcoal by Jamie Clark

Mice Become White Horses

A feeling that seems to last forever,
 Being in love all over again.
 Can't believe it was happening.
 Dreams of fairytales enter her sleep.
 Electrifying is the feeling;
 Forever she believes.
 Gorgeous smile that outshines the sun with luring eyes.
 Happily ever after is the ending to the story she reads.
 Is this real or just a dream?
 Jumping gulleys, flowing streams guard her castle dreams.
 Kitchen mice become white horses.
 Love at first sight nearly over.
 Men come knocking at her door.
 Never ended this way before.
 Just a dream inside her head.

---Kathryn Love

A Mystical Being

The summer sky becomes dark; the horses stir.
A lightening bolt streaks across the sky.
An innocent colt is frightened . . .

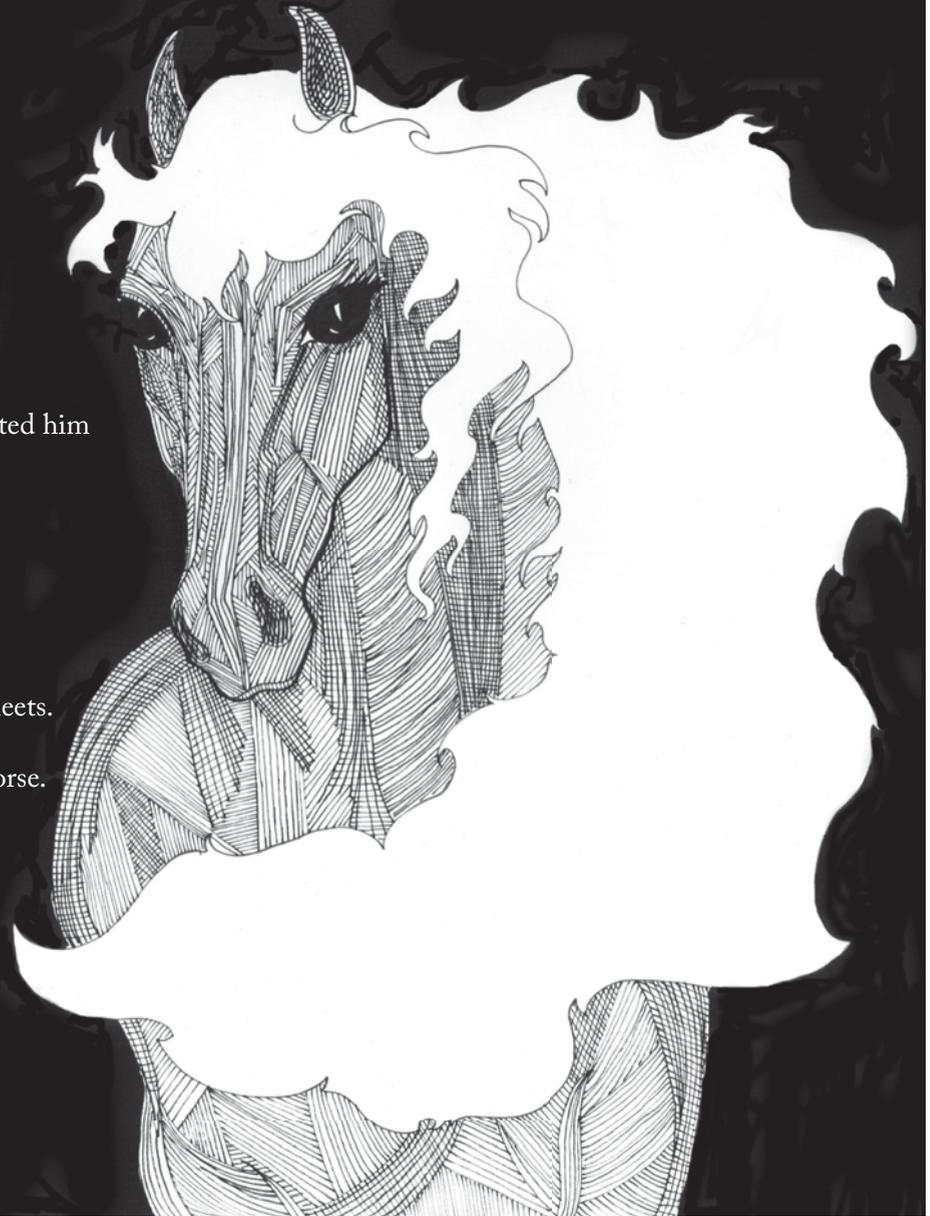
A crash of thunder is audible in the distance.
The colt leaps over the simple wooden fence that has restricted him
For almost a year . . .

The storm is building; the colt runs free.
Lightening strikes a nearby tree.
The colt runs at full speed--his wispy mane and white coat
Gleaming with the sudden flashes.

The thunder's dim is now heard--rain is coming down in sheets.

The once tranquil being now metamorphosis into a crazy horse.
He rears up--with hot breath and eyes fire red--
A bolt strikes . . .
All is silent.

---Janie Evans



My Chimera

Is brand spanking new
 And just out of the box,
 But with the fullness of age
 It will snarl and gnash its many teeth.

A part of this beast
 Sprawls upon my desk
 Like a squat homunculus,
 Its baleful reptilian eye
 Leering at me
 As I stare at a strange tablet of runes
 And this strange beetle with its long tail.

One part is rather like
 An angler fish,
 Luring me with false promises
 And quickly seizing upon my mistakes.
 Argus eyed,
 It never fails to notice
 The smallest misstep.

Eater of words,
 Shredder of paragraphs,
 Rogue amanuensis,
 This Chronus would eat its children
 Without compunction
 And smile like an innocent babe.
 O winged horse!
 Take me away!

---Kenneth Homer

Hands

Swirls and twirls, ridges and cracks.
 Look at one's hands
 and go down their tracks.
 Callused and worn, proper and prim,
 one's hands tell a lot
 about her or him.
 Where they were born,
 how they were raised,
 what will they do to pass their days?
 Hoeing in fields,
 staring at screens,
 fixing one's hair,
 they're living their dreams.
 Hand in hand we walk down the aisle
 to greet each other with more than a smile.
 A ring on a finger, a say of "I do,"
 The hands are a way to say "I love you."
 Swirls and twirls, ridges and cracks.
 Look at one's hands
 and go down their tracks.
 Callused and worn, proper and prim,
 one's hands tell a lot
 about her or him.

---Kristi Parker



graphite on paper Daniel Leveritt

The Visit

by Mark Dallas

The visit occurred at the third or fourth apartment I rented in St. Petersburg. Fleeing cockroaches and live-in friends who wouldn't leave, we lived in five different places in a little over two years--if you count Gregg and Debi's house, where we stayed for the first couple of months. (We left without having to be asked, as I recall.)

Bookcases stretched from the floor to the ceiling on the entire front wall, making the room kind of dark. Hundreds of books stood there, large and small, some with glossy, new dust jackets, others with old, worn cloth-bound spines facing out with gold, embossed lettering that had dulled over time. I have always loved to read, but I don't remember having that many books when I lived there. In the front door a small, diamond-shaped glass window at face level shone with the light of the sun outside. Next to the door stood a pole lamp that looked as if it would have been very modern in the 1960s--but that's when we lived there.

We were hosting some visitors, friends and family, I think. By "we" I mean my first (or second) wife and I. Anyway, we were all standing around talking, socializing a little before the breaking of bread and the taking of wine--although not in that order.

There came a knock at the door, and I can't remember who actually went to

answer it, but amidst shouts of surprise and cheerful greetings, my mother walked in. I swear she didn't look one day older than the last time I'd seen her. In the flurry of hugs and "How are you?"s that flew back and forth between the half dozen or so of us, I knew not what to say. And I don't remember exactly what happened—who said what—but somehow it led to my looking at Mom and saying, "Wait a minute! Let's start over. Let's just do that again, and this time we'll do it right."

Mom agreed. She turned around and went back out the front door, turned around on the stoop, and knocked on the door. This time I would be the one to let her in, to welcome her to my home, to hug her and smell her hair--it always smelled so clean. It's a funny thing to remember, what with all the other things I could have recalled. But as so often happens, other people and things kept distracting me. So I kept saying, "Leave me alone! I've got to let Mom in. She's standing out there on the stoop!"

And then I awoke and remembered she'd been dead for over twenty years—but for an instant when I was in the halfway world of dreaming and wakefulness, aware of my body lying on the bed but unable to move it, I knew that she was out there, and she was waiting.

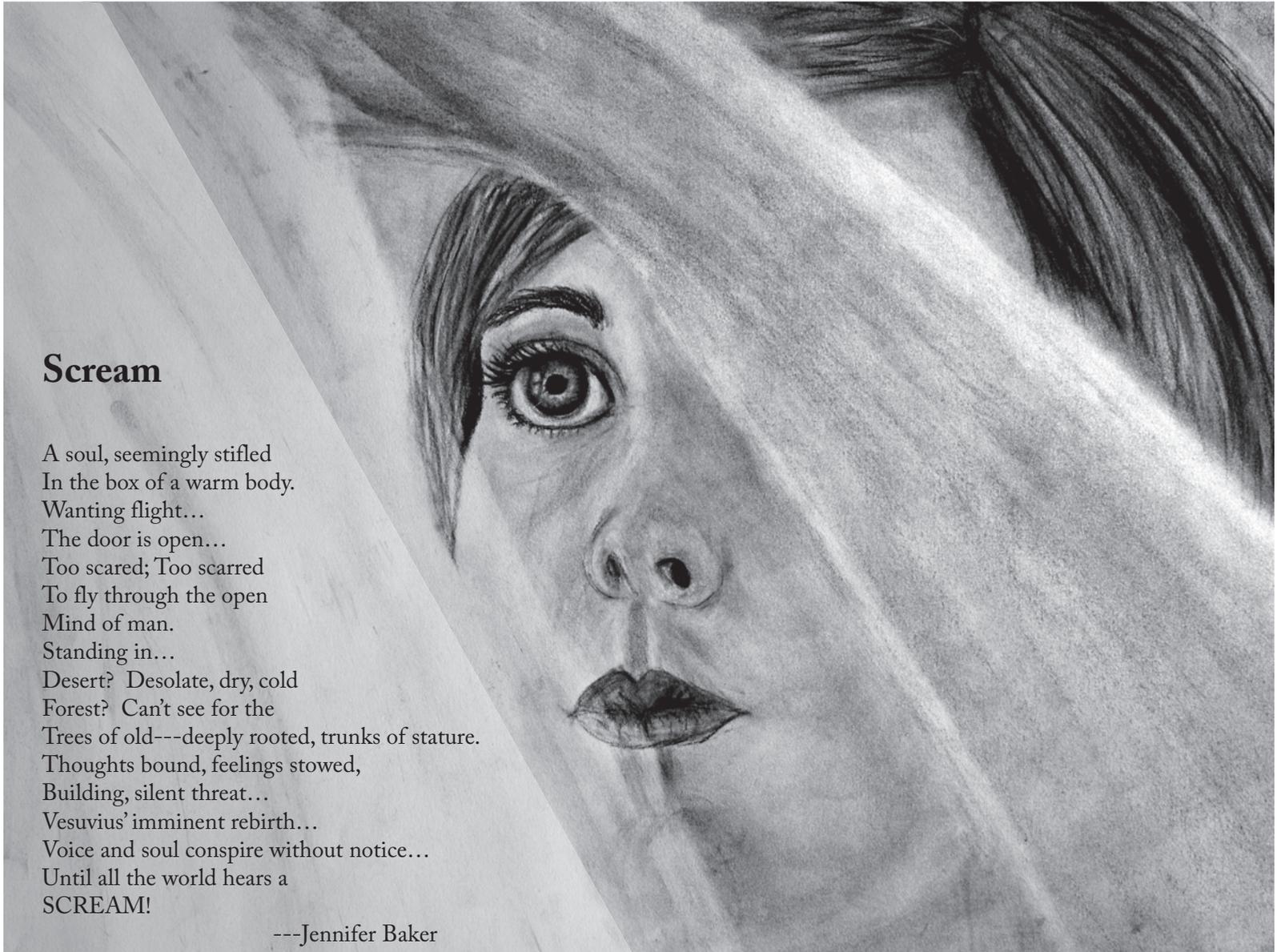


Scream

A soul, seemingly stifled
In the box of a warm body.
Wanting flight...
The door is open...
Too scared; Too scarred
To fly through the open
Mind of man.
Standing in...
Desert? Desolate, dry, cold
Forest? Can't see for the
Trees of old---deeply rooted, trunks of stature.
Thoughts bound, feelings stowed,
Building, silent threat...
Vesuvius' imminent rebirth...
Voice and soul conspire without notice...
Until all the world hears a
SCREAM!

---Jennifer Baker

charcoal by Marielle Williams





charcoal by Marielle Williams

The Moons of Jupiter Are Six Years Old

He saw the moons of Jupiter as dots
of light in the telescope--and felt words
the boy fired, like sling-shot "forget me nots."

The man stood still, as if he hadn't heard,
as if the words might make the planet move.
The sight of that bright world flowered, then blurred

in the dark wind. Turning, he cautioned, "You've
got to be careful... or it's back to bed."
His son, a spring wound tight, said, "Not fair! You've

been looking for hours!" And then, with head
drooping, pleas failing, the six year old moped
for ages, he thought, till his father said,

"Now. The wind will let you look. I hope.
Look now, but just don't touch the telescope."

---Mark Dallas

The One

We miss you, Son. The one who was special from the moment his life began.
We miss you, Brother. The one who can't be replaced in my heart by any other.
We miss you, Husband. The one who was my other half and my best friend.
We miss you, Daddy. The one who no matter what, was always there for me.
We miss you, Papa. The one who lives on through us all.
Thanks for filling our lives with so much joy. Forever we will miss you,
Little Boy.

---Jeanna Morris

No Time to Borrow

It seems to me,
In this world you'll see,
It's so sad to be
Obsessed and buried by dirty money,
By ignoring the poor
Dying in poverty.
Give your dollar, pass the plate.
Go ahead and smirk, your smiles are fake.
You sin, but repentance you procrastinate.
Not true to your faith.
Forget about fate.
You hope and pray you don't wait too late.
Pay your preacher to tell you what to believe
While children cry, starve, and bleed.
Their pain you can never conceive
Because your dollar for them you hide for greed
And continue to sow sin's bitter seed.
You can't justify your sins and lies,
Your evil, greedy, lustful eyes.
The truthful and valiant you despise,
Because at Jesus' feet they'll reside.
You're a hypocrite, and so this is your motto:
Sin today, live and burn in sorrow.
I say love one another today
Live with Christ tomorrow.
Pay your debts to God,
For time you cannot borrow.

---Jessica Driggers

What You Didn't Know

The thought of you fades in and out of my mind,
 Like footprints in sand that you keep leaving behind.
 We spend time together, even when we're not around each other.
 The mere thought of you is enough to make me smile,
 Though I know something so good will only last a while.
 I've heard others say they were here to stay, but like the footprints,
 In time, they too faded away.
 At first I was afraid and wanted you to leave, yet you came and never left,
 As though you saw something in me.
 I tried to fight what I had inside, feelings held back by foolish pride,
 It did no good and shown me why, while we grew closer as time went by.
 Little by little I let out for what I've yearned,
 And the more you learned the more I burned.
 But the mistake was made which neither of us could save,
 Burying our relationship in the grave.
 I ran from something I knew was true,
 Frightened by its beauty, and too scared to see it through.
 Nothing is worse than living in regret, wondering what could have been.
 Constantly I am haunted by my wrong decision.
 My soul has been opened to show its Hell,
 The scar on a heart that's now just a story I tell.
 We both know this isn't an attempt to make amends,
 But a chance to let you know in the end.
 Baby I loved you more than you'll ever know,
 And it's my fault, because I never let it show.

---Abran Cruz

Dreamless Reality

What a forlorn walk we lead
 In this heart of brokenness,
 In this life of pain and bliss.
 Is there truly happiness?
 With each new life we give,
 There's accepted one ideal,
 One ever-changing notion—
 The dream of being real,
 The root of all we speak,
 The promise never read,
 Our hope of just becoming,
 That something in our heads,
 The struggle for completion,
 The thing we yearn for still
 Is never satisfied.
 It's left for said, "Until."
 That dreams again in night,
 We hold it in our grasp,
 Our peaceful air delight,
 And wake to our tomorrow,
 And see it is today;
 That dream that we'd once held,
 Has faded twice away.

---Brittany Horton

Beyond the Heat

I have awakened to live another day
 Only by God's Good Grace,
 And if I am truly blessed,
 Together this world we'll face.

My love goes beyond all others,
 Beyond the passion and far beyond the heat.
 It's the excitement of your touch, the joy
 Of your smile and the peace of hearing your heart beat.

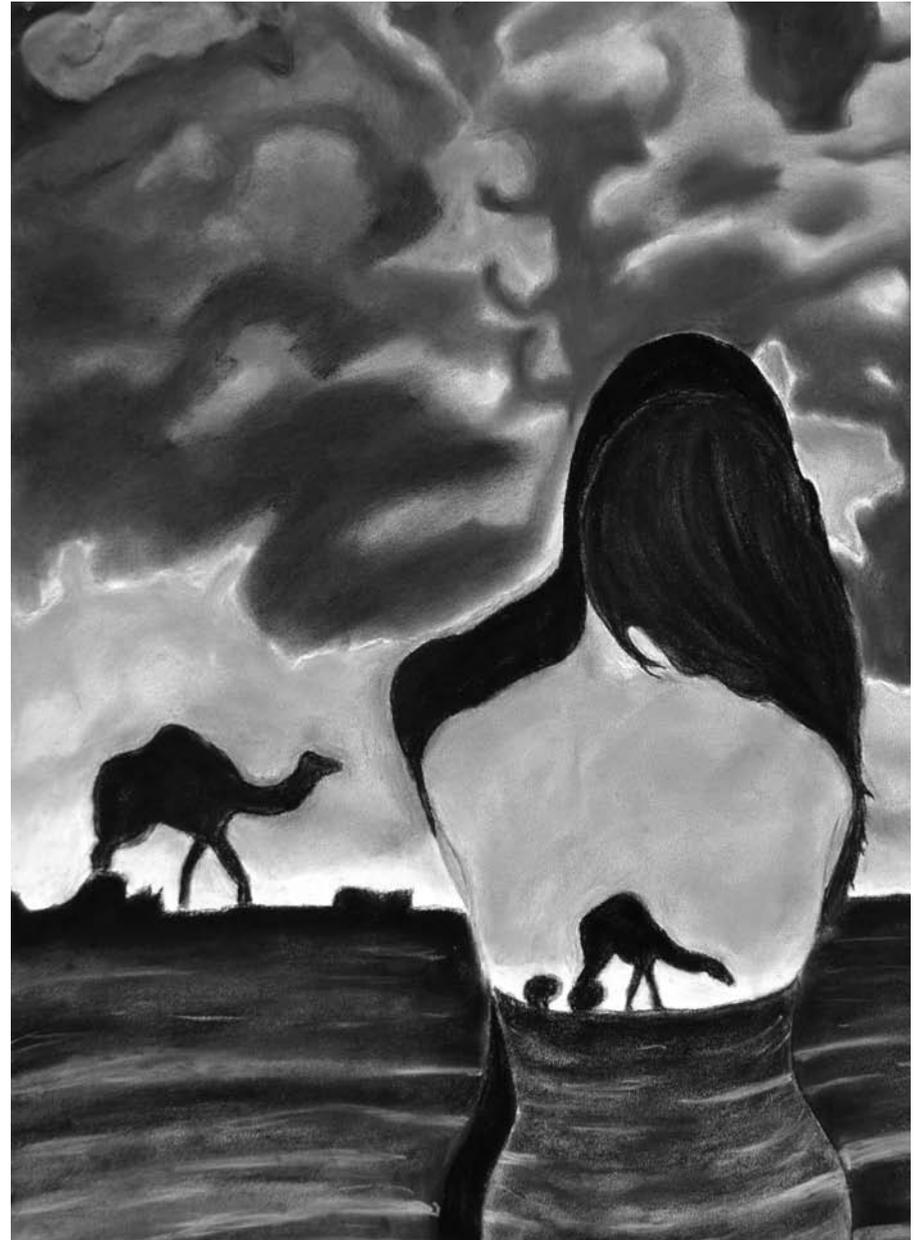
It's the safety and comfort I feel in your
 Arms and the exploration of your mind.
 It's the tranquility and love I see in your
 Eyes, for my soul therein you find.

---Jessica Driggers

One Shoe

Why is there only one shoe in the road,
 To make me feel mateless, lonely, and old?
 Does a trickster want to mess with my head?
 Is the owner one-legged? Barefoot? Dead?
 Is it something I am not meant to know
 'til I see heaven or that place below?

---S.D. Lavender



pastel on paper by Daniel Leveritt



oil on canvas by Brittany Bellflower

Midnight Tolls...

The mirror reflected the shadows of the night.
The room illuminated in an unholy light.

The darkness is coming, a creeping fear.
The darkness is coming; it draws near.

A child sobs in the corner, waiting for the dark,
Knowing her fate, proven by the mark...

The Mark of the Dark King, ruler of the night,
When midnight tolls, he'll take his flight...

11:57 turns slowly at the hollow berth,
The Dark Lord is coming, in his wrath and mirth...

11:58 comes the next chime of the clock.
The doors swing open, though they were locked...

11:59 the hellfire surrounds her, blocking escape.
A gate opens before her, a decaying stink...

The second brings demons to torture and taunt.
The third brings darkness, a memory that haunts...

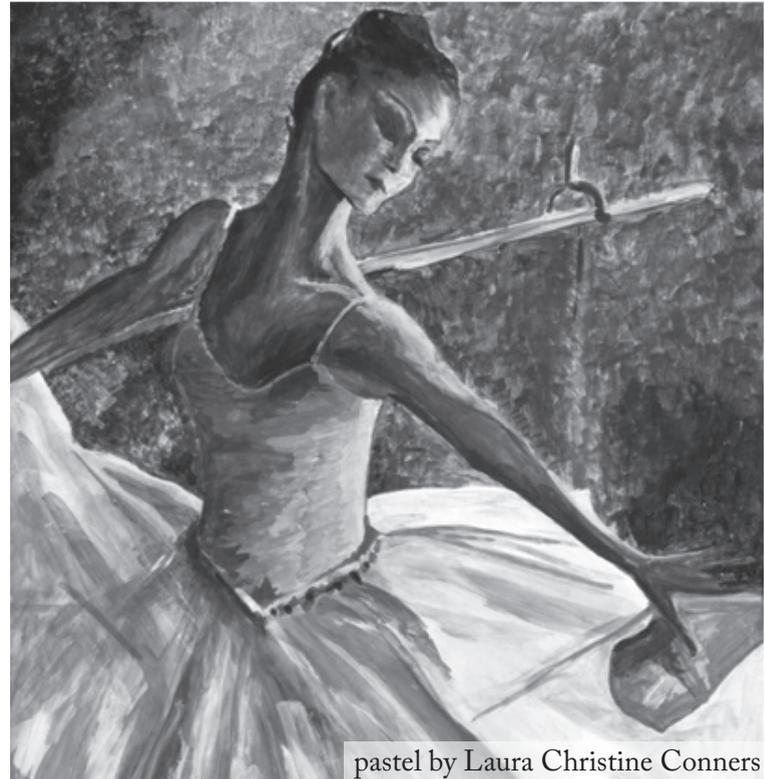
The fourth brings pain, agony, and defeat.
The fifth brings fire of an unbearable heat...

The sixth has the demons, dragging her down.
The seventh destroys the air around, causing fear she'll drown.

The eighth brings her before him, to look into his eyes.
The ninth means nothing, as she is mesmerized.

The tenth comes without warning, causing her fear.
The next to final warns she'll be trapped here...
Midnight tolls...
And she is no more...

---Alexandra Starling



pastel by Laura Christine Connors

Imaginary

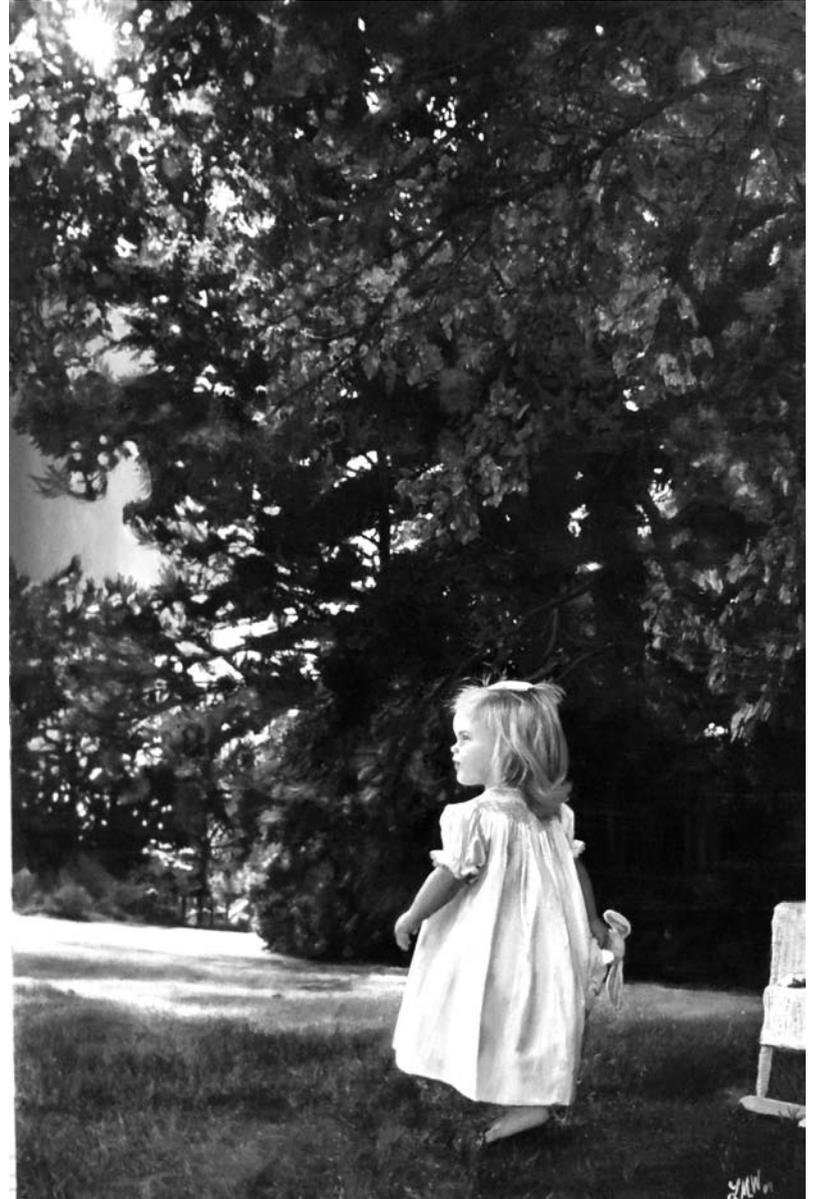
I saw the headlights on the horizon.
I heard my phone ring and knew it was him.
I carried my purse, keys, and a shirt for later.
I followed him, and surprisingly
The slap of the door was a welcome gesture.
The call of the child was nowhere around us.
The steps in the hall were ours alone.
The crowd on the corner knew who I wasn't.
I witness myself changing when
I stop by the mirror to check my lipstick.
I touch my face; this isn't me.

---Beth Mckenzie

Words of Wisdom

My words of wisdom are intended to enlighten the unknown.
 Many wish and dream for things with no means.
 Life should be eventful and serious because
 Life is short, so let's live life healthy.
 Times may be hard, but there's a brighter day after dark,
 It's our courage that fights fear, not our body.
 Only God can judge us, so believe in all positive things
 So that our minuses will not make a difference.
 We wouldn't ask why the rose grew from the concrete,
 Instead we would all celebrate its tenacity.
 We would all love its will to reach the sun.
 Well, we are the roses, this is the concrete,
 And these are my damaged petals. Don't ask me why.
 Thank God. Ask me how.
 To all my seeds that follow me—protect your essence,
 Even though you are born with less, you are still precious.
 And if you cannot find something to live for, then you best find
 Something to die for.
 Keep God in your heart as we walk through hardship.
 And you will be rewarded with love, peace, and eternity.
 God Bless.

---Tyrone Dro Murphy



mixed media by Marielle Williams

Wiregrass Contributors:

Amanda Ely, Editor

Kristi Parker, Assistant Editor

Brittany Horton

Joseph Johnson

Lisa Keyton

Kristin Kyser

S.D. Lavender

Daniel Leveritt

Kathryn Love

Jon Luke

Bob Marsh

Alexander McIntosh

Beth Mckenzie

Jeanna Morris

Tyrone Dro Murphy

Cerisse Ortiz

Tammy Patton

Jared Luke Peacock

Paris Pitts

India Price

Desmal Purcell

Sir Rainey

Deanna Ryan

Alexandra Starling

Kathy Thompson

Jonathan Tillery

Michael Wedincamp

Marielle Williams

Quala Young

Kim Adams

Jennifer Baker

Brittany Bellflower

Chris Blackburn

Alan Brasher

Jacquie Brasher

Jamie Clark

Laura Christine Connors

Abran Cruz

Mark Dallas

Jessica Driggers

Janie Evans

Sammy Hall

Michael Owen Henry

Kenneth Homer