

# *Talking Leaves*



*Fall 2009 - Spring 2010*



# TALKING LEAVES

COPYRIGHT 2009-2010



# TALKING LEAVES STAFF

## Production Editors

Oshu Huddleston, Senior Editor  
Cole Billman, Assistant Editor

## Production Assistant

Joe Land

## Faculty Sponsor

Lisa Siefker Bailey, Ph.D.

## Advisory Editor

Katherine V. Wills, Ph.D.

## Copy Editors

Jerry Baker  
Cole Billman  
Lindsey Daugherty  
Oshu Huddleston  
Abby Jones  
Joe Land

COPYRIGHT 2009-2010 BY THE TRUSTEES OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY. UPON PUBLICATION, COPYRIGHT REVERTS TO THE AUTHOR/ARTIST. WE RETAIN THE RIGHT TO ELECTRONICALLY ARCHIVE AND PUBLISH ALL ISSUES FOR POSTERITY AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC. TALKING LEAVES IS PUBLISHED ANNUALLY BY THE TALKING LEAVES IUPUC DIVISION OF LIBERAL ARTS EDITORIAL BOARD.

## STATEMENT OF POLICY AND PURPOSE

TALKING LEAVES ACCEPTS ORIGINAL WORKS OF FICTION, POETRY, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND LINE DRAWINGS FROM STUDENTS AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY COLUMBUS. EACH ANONYMOUS SUBMISSION IS REVIEWED BY A SELECTION ROUNDTABLE AND IS JUDGED SOLELY ON ARTISTIC MERIT.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## VII – A WORD FROM THE FACULTY SPONSOR

1	-	Beachcomber	-	poem by Beth McQueen
1	-	The Flight	-	poem by Cole Billman
2	-	Drifting	-	poem by Sarah Akemon
3	-	Water PROOF	-	poem by Joe Land
4	-	Noir Goode	-	short fiction by Oshu Huddleston
7	-	Untitled (Short heaves)	-	poem by Joe Land
8	-	National Treasure	-	poem by Sarah Akemon
8	-	Untitled (1)	-	poem by Beth McQueen
8	-	Untitled (2)	-	poem by Beth McQueen
9	-	what is this sedentary thing	-	poem by Joe Land
9	-	In the Hour of Our Death	-	poem by Sarah Akemon
10	-	Write Shitty	-	poem by Sherry Traylor
10	-	Blah. Eck! Crazy.	-	poem by Joe Land
11	-	Waste Management	-	poem by Oshu Huddleston
11	-	The Last Walk	-	poem by Sherry Traylor
12	-	Comfortable Mornings and Crying Over Breakfast	-	play by Joe Land
21	-	The Hand that Watches Me Draw-	-	sketch by Lisa Siefker Bailey
22	-	The Color of the Sky	-	poem by Fabiola Cabrera
23	-	Just	-	poem by Mike Fry

24	-	Lucinda	-	prose by Joe Land
25	-	Where Have You Been, Anastasia Zenith?	-	short fiction by Oshu Huddleston
30	-	Draw Rein, Draw Breath	-	poem by Robert Stilwell
31	-	Camila: Ticket to Hell	-	excerpt from a graphic novel by Fabiola Cabrera
35	-	The Bird	-	poem by Roseanne M Gordon
36	-	Tree frogs	-	poem by Peter Oren
36	-	The Man in the Corner	-	short fiction by Oshu Huddleston
37	-	Odd	-	poem by Tammy Sue Burton
39	-	College town with coffee	-	poem by Joe Land

40 - BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

COVER ART BY SHERRY TRAYLOR

FRONT COVER: “Clothespins”

BACK COVER: “MAN LIKE”



# FROM THE FACULTY SPONSOR

Welcome to the fourteenth issue of the IUPUC literary magazine! *Talking Leaves* showcases prose, poetry, and artwork of IUPUC students and occasionally highlights faculty or staff work. The Division of Liberal Arts is proud of the English Club and its efforts to launch this year's magazine, which has become increasingly student-run. We had a rise in the number of poetry submissions this year and are thrilled to include so many selections. We also had a new genre appear and hope you enjoy the excerpt from our first graphic novel submission, another innovation in the evolution of the magazine. This year's *Talking Leaves* has been more student-driven than ever before, thanks to the experience of student editors and their enthusiasm to work hard on the magazine and involve newcomers in the process. Every stage of the magazine has been run by students: call for submissions, editorial selection, layouts, copy-editing, and both online as well as print production. It's been a pleasure for me to advise our dedicated students as they crafted this year's magazine with its landscape design and fresh vision. To create the magazine, IUPUC students submit works under a blind review process, and student copy editors base acceptances on quality. We owe many thanks to Vicki Kruse, the Division of Liberal Arts Senior Administrative Secretary, for managing submissions and biographical notes in order to retain anonymity during the selection process. We also appreciate the expertise of faculty members: Jerry Baker proofread copy when the students requested it in the galley stage, and Katherine Wills provided support in our final readings. Please note that *Talking Leaves'* purpose is to empower voices and to encourage self-expression; as such, works receive only minimal copy-editing to preserve the uniqueness of each contributor's voice.

When the first IUPUC magazine of the arts appeared in 1994, it debuted under the name *Literalines*. The name was changed to *Talking Leaves* in 2005. The story goes that American settlers carrying maps, letters, and other documents caught the attention of Native Americans. The papers rustled like leaves, and the Native Americans realized the power of written documents that "talk." When you read *Talking Leaves*, you celebrate the power of words and images with us by listening to the contributors "talk" while you leaf through our pages.

I want to close with special thanks to the IUPUC English Club and the IUPUC Student Council who generously spent student monies to publish this magazine.

Lisa Siefker Bailey

## *Beachcomber*

Beth McQueen

Beginning at dawn, he stirs to pink aurora whispers.  
Eagerly he dons familiar shabby jeans, trusty bag,  
and a Buffett T-shirt infused with threadbare nostalgia.  
Chewing down his quick honey oat breakfast, he flits  
happily to the drowsy beach where motley treasures await.  
Carefully he examines polished shapes of peeking sea glass,  
old soulless sneakers, and sodden bits of fishing nets tangled in  
miscellany flotsam and jetsam. Mysteries teem among discarded  
bottles, warped plastic toys, and forgotten dirt-cruste d coins.  
Enchanted by each sundry morsel he gazes silently out to sea,  
rejoicing in the moment, so rich with undiscovered crannies.

## *The Flight*

Cole Billman

I' m on the  
moon  
now,  
watching, waiting, wondering  
wishing, weeping, wanting.

I wonder  
why,  
drifting, dreaming, dying

Alone.

## *Drifting*

Sarah Akemon

The quiet twilight tide,  
Bringing to the darkness  
Paperclips and bottles.  
No more than a whisper,  
A murmur as it pulls  
Off the broken pieces.

All the lonely pieces  
Are taken by the tide  
Whose icy fingers pull  
Rubbish into darkness,  
The moon's distant whisper  
Caught in milk white bottles.

Messages in bottles  
Carried off in pieces.  
The grey ocean whispers.  
Blue fish sleep in the tide.  
All things sleep in darkness.  
We cannot fight the pull.

This heavy white pill pull,  
Taken from a bottle  
Takes us to the darkness.  
We are left in pieces,  
Dark in the aimless tide,  
Listening to the whisper.

Water's sing-song whisper,  
The pale moon firmly pulls  
Us, rubbish in the tide  
Along with the bottles  
And all of the pieces

Of glass in the darkness.  
Mute and hopeless darkness  
Swallows all the whispers,  
Removes all the pieces.  
Blindly, heartlessly pulls  
Newspaper and bottles  
Into it with the tide.

We are caught in the pull  
With the broken bottles.  
Time, darkness, and the tide.

## *Water PROOF*

Joe Land

water creeps up past your ankles  
warm but full of dirt  
you wonder when it wants  
to turn to mud  
forward movement  
seems to be a thing of the past  
like horses and oil lamp lighting  
the wind finally quit  
its replacement surely to come  
the insects sit in their homes  
staying out of the rain  
comfortable arm chairs and warm dry  
carpets lay around the house as the bugs  
think and ask each other  
if their lives are going as planned  
they look sad --  
if that is a sad insect face --  
the wind came back  
and the insects fly away  
who cares about them anyway  
the mud is advancing

# *Noir Goode*

Oshu Huddleston

Goode stood on the corner of Lavender Court and Benson Street. He leaned against a light post imagining his visage barely lit by the light, though it was mid-day. He reached up and reset the position of his tattered gray and black baseball cap as if he were smoothly positioning a sharp fedora. Goode knew that the bad guys were just behind him, waiting patiently for their moment to strike just down Lavender. Goode knew that his fate was inevitable and he had accepted it. Before the end, he simply wanted to stand on the corner one more time and draw in the world around him how he viewed it.

Just one year ago, Randolph Goode's life had taken the first of its hits. He was self-employed as a videographer, and business had not been what he expected. In the age when people could go out and buy the necessary equipment to film their own projects, Goode's business idea was not as needed as he thought. The near bankruptcy of his business led him to accept a less-than virtuous contract from a private detective by the name of Horus Gunckle, who contacted him at home via the only telephone booth in town. Gunckle was investigating the case of infidelity by Mr. Frederick Villawright, as instructed by Mrs. Frederick Villawright. Mr. Villawright happened to be the brother of a very important New England senator, so Gunckle asked Goode to keep things confidential.

Goode accompanied Gunckle on a few stakeouts and filmed documentary-style. The "hit" that Goode's life took came after filming Mr. Villawright at a mistress' townhouse, the arrival of a rabid Mrs. Villawright, Gunckle's boisterous interception of Mrs. Villawright on said townhouse's front lawn, and the confrontation of Gunckle, the Villawrights, and mistress Layla Geneva. The microphone of Goode's camera picked up Mr. Villawright's phrase "I'll kill you," directed at Gunckle, particularly well. Gunckle asked

Goode that night to keep the tapes from that evening in a very safe place. Goode asked his wife Virginia to hide them for him. Virginia hid them in the air conditioning vent in the floor of their son Redwin's bedroom.

A week later, Mrs. Villawright folded to Mr. Villawright's pressures (Mr. Villawright had his own pressures from an important New England senator uncle), and she told him all about hiring Horus Gunckle to investigate. She even told Mr. Villawright of Gunckle's hiring of a videographer by the name of Goode and that she thought some very incriminating things had been videotaped. It was just the day after the taping that Horus Gunckle was found dead in an alleyway off of Lavender Court, just around the corner from his office. Mr. Villawright was no doubt disturbed at Mrs. Villawright's testimony of the videographer who more than likely captured the threat on Gunckle's life.

Goode had never been in such a situation before. Before the lull in business, he spent years filming kindergarten graduations, karaoke competitions, wedding receptions, video wills, etc. It was a healthy business without a dark side. Had he any recent business he might have passed over Gunckle's proposal on the mysterious nature of it alone. He was a simple, pleasant-natured man who was trying to make a living and he was surprised by his involvement in conspiracy and murder. So he, of course, went to his wife for help.

Virginia Goode had always taken care of predicaments and complications that were even slightly over Randolph's head. She had a knack for calmly and coolly taking affirmative, reparative action to any minor or major snag in their lives and marriage. Randolph was thankful to have her. Their marriage was more about partnership than love, but Randolph did not mind at all. He loved her and she loved him; they knew that. But Randolph was far more focused on trying to be successful as a businessman, and in his erroneous judgment of the need for personal videographers, he also held an old-school conviction that he should provide for his family, and Virginia

should never have to work. Virginia supported this value of Randolph's, and in doing so missed out on the daily stress of the working woman. Virginia was always relaxed and clear-headed, which is why she was always such an excellent problem-solver. Randolph was proud to wear the dunce hat at times and hand over the reigns to Virginia in certain situations.

Even Virginia was shocked at what Randolph had gotten involved in. He told her everything he knew about the situation and he gave her the tape. She shamed him for going such a route for money and apologized. Virginia took control, though, and decided that hiding the tape for the moment while they considered their options was the safest bet. They both knew that they would eventually have to go to the police, but they were concerned about their son Redwin. Virginia hid the tape and then she and Redwin left to stay with her mother on the other side of the city. The itinerary had Randolph wait a day, then go to the police to divulge what he knew, and then guide them to the tape.

Goode spent the night in a seedy motel on the outskirts of the city. The walls were pungent with murky mold. The soured linens on the creaky, warped mattress were especially uninviting. The overhead fluorescent lighting flickered like lightning striking the ceiling and walls. Goode initially accepted his single-serving abode because it was just for one night. After each minute passed, he thought about his situation more. He saw how noir his situation was. The more he thought about it, the more he experienced a sly grin on his face. He began to remember the aged television shows he watched when he was just a boy. Black and white private eyes lurked among the shadows searching for clues that will break their cases. Goode realized that he was in the midst of such a noir situation, and the memories of boyhood, late night television enjoyment had done something to him. The tape, the murder, the sad stated motel room, his family leaving him (even if only for a night)...he became noir.

The telephone rang just before sunrise. It was a loud, metallic ring that missed a beat or two due to the poor condition of the motel room phone. Goode opened his eyes to look at the damaged phone which appeared to have been assaulted by a hammer, possibly a solid punch. He picked up the receiver and held it to the side of his head.

"Is this Goode?" A raspy voice on the other end said.

Goode cleared his throat and thought about how to answer.

"Dammit, is this Goode?" The man on the other end grew impatient.

"Yeah, this is Goode," Goode said. "Who wants to know?" He felt invincible at that moment, no matter how foolish it was to disclose his identity. He wasn't about to be intimidated by anything, much less a scratchy voice on the telephone.

"Bring your tape to the alleyway off of Lavender Court," the voice cracked at Goode. "No police, if you know what is good for you."

"What's in it for me?" Goode asked, as if he had anything more than survival to gain.

The man on the other end of the line ended the call. Goode saw that as a sign of fear.

"That's what I thought," Goode said. "These guys are no Goode." He knew that he could never give them the tape.

Goode walked to the corner market near the motel. He lit a cigarette as he entered, to which the store's clerk had a few things to say, but not back up. No matter to Goode. To Goode's delight, the store carried VHS tapes. He snatched one and removed the packaging. He attached the accompanying sticker label crooked, on purpose, to give the tape a more used feel. At the excited request of the clerk, Goode paid for the tape and left.

Goode was being followed. He had a feeling he was being tailed. A very conspicuous white '57 Chevy pulled up to the curb as Goode entered the market, now it was rolling along twenty feet

behind at the same pace Goode walked. Goode kept his pace and pretended to not notice.

Eventually Goode arrived at the corner of Lavender and Benson. He could see the alleyway that the man on the phone had spoken of. He knew that trouble lurked in that alley, and he knew that he had no choice but to deliver. Little did the baddies know, though, Goode would deliver a bogus tape. On more pressing matters, the Chevy slowed and stopped, just twenty feet behind. As Goode adjusted his fedora, he could almost sense the loading of a tommy gun in the Chevy. He pondered his fate: if he had to go out, at least he could go out making headlines. "Goode Gunned Down Doing Good." It would be something along those lines. The Chevy suddenly sped off into the aforementioned alleyway. He knew that he would have to go into that alley and take care of business.

What happened next was a flurry of fists and fury. One goon was disarmed with a quick Goode jab to the gut, then a spinning takedown into a nearby brick wall. The next goon, who ignorantly rushed an adrenaline fuelled Goode, was sidestepped and flipped into a rusty dumpster. The final goon brandished a gleaming blade.

"Give me the tape, Goode," a familiar, raspy voice demanded.

"Come and get it, creep," Goode demanded back.

The knife thrust forward at Goode, who stepped ever so slightly back, then disarmed the man with a quick, crushing blow to his wrist. The knife hit the blacktop with a piercing ring. Goode palmed the man in the throat, blocking the passage of air to his lungs. Goode reached forward and wrenched the man's neck, and threw him to the pavement. None of the goons could fight any longer. Goode threw the bogus tape next to the final goon.

"Here's your tape," Goode said. "Enjoy."

Goode returned to the lamp post at Lavender and Benson. He leaned against the light post and watched the sun rise on a new day.

Noir Goode lit a cigarette and enjoyed his victory over those who wished to hurt him and those he loved. Randolph Goode leaned against the lamppost chewing on an ink pen. Noir Goode laughed at the feeble attempts of the baddies to subdue him. Randolph Goode cackled at the homeless people he just assaulted in the alley. Noir Goode smiled at the notion of his wife and son returning to him today. Randolph Goode grinned foolishly at the notion of his family wanting anything to do with him ever again. Noir Goode knew the tape of the senator threatening the deceased Gunckle would be going to the police in an hour or so. Randolph Goode would give a confused police sergeant a VHS tape of Goode's neighbors going about their daily lives. Noir Goode's wife would come home, pleased with her husband's wily escapades during the night. Randolph Goode's wife left him for losing his perception of reality.

Noir Goode would live to fight another day. Randolph Goode would live out his deluded fantasies, in one way or another.

## *Untitled (Short heaves)*

Joe Land

Short heaves, my chest feels wiggly  
And I don't want this to happen  
I'd rather be locked in jail than  
Lose all of this  
And I wish I could draw smiles on paper  
Pick them up and make both of us  
Happy so we could forget it all happened  
Instead of creating magic drawings  
I drink my chest still  
Hope to laugh just enough  
And think of curling up to a blanket

And then it settles back and I focus on other things  
Than writing, class, riding my bicycle  
Fast like melting butter  
Then I remember that I have to leave  
It's only inconvenient,  
It's not personal  
And this girl across the way  
Polka dots of white,  
But it's not her,  
It's the other, the  
One that just talked  
And she has this Warhol fuck's  
Awesome nico art  
Peel slowly and see  
I hope she's a Velvet's fiend

I hope she doesn't think  
That I'm creepy  
I wrote so much  
I forgot how to cry  
Too many metaphors pouring out  
So fast  
And I wondered  
Why the page was littered by  
Drops of water—  
Smearing it, distorting it  
Making my pen wet.



## *National Treasure*

Sarah Akemon

In their sterile spotlight quarantine

They rise stately, full of knowledge and

The poetry of silent languages.

From a slender base the swelling ghost fruits

Inhale and burst and gasp with mouths wide

Open, waiting for the coming darkness.

Could it be that there is Hope left

At the bottom of these secret vessels:

Homes to wisdom, ashes of the past?

No, they are full of only breath and time.

White urns: The lungs of a decaying world.

## *Untitled (1)*

Beth McQueen

Tanka:

His timid breath leaks

heady words. Humid tongue spills

Muted vaults of fire

parading on my surface.

Hands like clay make waves on skin

## *Untitled (2)*

Beth McQueen

Tanka:

This is how night falls.

Lank limbs rustle. Evening winds

Stir as stars compose.

Sun shades his blinding eye while

moon unfolds her stellar play.

## *what is this sedentary thing*

Joe Land

What do I make of this,  
when a woman wants me  
to stick around  
for long hauls and brief stayovers  
and trust without everknowing  
how someone thinks,  
or even holding a shred of connection.  
What do I think of  
    mindlessly fucking  
and suffering long tedious orgasms,  
with no next day fucks  
and tingles and looking forward to' s.  
I find myself bored and flimsy,  
hoping to become stiff and angered  
by emotions of extreme love mixed with anxious happiness.  
This one dimension of passionless sexual encounters  
and fleeting moments of understanding  
pushes emotions of guilt,  
not for the humans involved,  
but the deprived bodies  
that love can' t fill.  
What kind of togetherness  
is this sedentary thing?

## *In the Hour of Our Death*

Sarah Akemon

Blue fire halos my copper wire hair,  
Sacred heart weeping, I kneel at my prayer.  
My torn knees take on a modest red blush,  
And from stained glass eyes the jeweled lights rush.  
There are many things I need to repair.  
  
Pill bottle rosaries laid on a chair,  
Glassy eyes fixed in a heavenward stare,  
A helpful somebody hands me a brush,  
Blue fire halos my copper wire hair.  
  
Hunched over gargoyles drool puddles and glare,  
Saints drop their eyes as their holy robes tear.  
Nobody disturbs the medicine hush.  
Buckled-up straight jacket; my ribs are crushed.  
White-jacket gentlemen peddle their wares,  
Blue fire halos my copper wire hair.

## *Write Shitty*

Sherry Traylor

Write Shitty...  
Write Shitty...  
Instructed the teacher.

To expand the mind—  
Write without conventions—  
Write random thoughts, without concern.  
Just write.

The words came in thrusts,  
Then in blurts.  
Small confusing emotions  
Scribbled on an empty page,  
Without time or place.

Tensions and fears—  
Singled out.  
This brought back  
Second grade gym class,  
When I was the only one  
Who couldn't climb the rope.

Twisted and going nowhere,  
To the top of a steel beam.  
In a dark dusty gym full  
Of sugar-wired second graders,  
A little weak girl sat  
Watching everyone else  
Touch the beam and shimmy down.

## *Blah. Eck! Crazy.*

Joe Land

My insanity gets in the  
Way of personal engagements  
Relationships and casual fucking

And I see things, no,  
Only the thing  
Laying there next to me,  
I love her,

I want to grab,  
Pull  
Choke and fuck.

## *Waste Management*

Oshu Huddleston

You people—

You don't pay me enough

To tidy up after you,

Your litter, your shit.

You toss it aside and hope—

NO! You could care less—

You think to yourself

“Someone has my back,”

When someone should paint it

With targets, marking you.

Mother Earth isn't your landfill

And I'm not your garbage man.

I want to burn the waste and watch

The planet go up in smoke.

## *The Last Walk*

Sherry Traylor

The sewer reads, “Sanitary”

With measured steps I jump it.

The sign blinks, “today only,”

With increased wealth I pass it.

The Prophet yells, “the end is near,”

And with sincerity I ask it,

“Could you be more specific?”

# *Comfortable Mornings and Crying Over Breakfast*

a play by  
Joe Land

*Young children, finishing Bible studies and once concealed snacks, rush out of a church's basement classroom. Two men, presumably the children's teachers, remain. One of them, Samos, looks confused and seems to mutter to himself. The other, Mayfield, is angry because children were eating in his classroom.*

**Samos:** Just Looked Down and saw blood all over my

Shoe.  
Yup, definitely Blood.

**Mayfield:** Mother crunching in the snow  
Chewing their starch snacks  
In the classroom while  
I'm trying to doodle  
The nerve, still nervous  
Around other people who  
Weren't criminals trapped  
In a state of condemning stares

**Samos:** Hasty hating of wrong voices  
Crowding in the hall  
Hoping to amplify  
Into your foyer

*Overhead a voice beckons: There will be  
coffee and fellowship  
after church.*

*Mayfield, a furry man, bearded, tobacco stained, yet dressed in his best Goodwill suit, and Samos, a man appearing to be undead, pale and sleepy, walk across the street to a small, unclean diner. They sit down, their accustomed seat, both facing the window, watching others enter the church. A waiter approaches, young, latin, greased.*

**Samos:** I think I'll have the coffee,  
runny eggs and toast,  
my friend will have the biscuits  
and bacon  
with orange juice.

**Mayfield:** Comfortable mornings are the time I feel most happy—well at least before I think—I remember the trouble I got in, still getting over it by the day—before I think past incarcerating youths and setting them up, entrapping them as soldiers of a good cause. I depress and wither away,

Crying over breakfast.

*The waiter has long since disappeared, performing other mundane tasks.*

*Samos lights a cigarette, offers one to Mayfield, who accepts but uses his own lighter. Samos grabs another ash tray from an adjoining table. It is full of lip-stick stained, white filtered, lady-like cigarette butts. They look clean.*

**Samos:** It seems to me you might just give up on breakfast, You know, kill it, cut it out, trap its cancerous attacks on your mind and just move on to lunch, or do all meals fuck with you? And if you had given up on something so ordinary and commonplace as breakfast, why do you preach at children?

**Mayfield:** It's not that I've given up, I haven't, I can't, I'm saying I usually like my mornings, but there's the possibility that it all could go wrong: one sudden thought, or even a slow one, and it's done, its shot. I'm not saying that I mind crying, and the children just like to listen, well, they try.

**Samos:** I listen and get distracted like the rest of them, they're young, hungry. They have parents, parents that make them stay for church; they don't have me to order breakfast for them.

**Mayfield:** Well fuck the church anyways, they take words, spit on them, flail their interpretations around like swords. It nauseates me; And, like you say, it cuts into my breakfast.

*Samos exhales, fishes out a small shot of coffee liqueur, dumps it in his coffee, looks at Mayfield.*

**Samos:** Is that what you think goes on in there? You know, after we emerge from the basement, like slow, dumb dogs finally getting up?

**Mayfield:** I stayed and listened once; it drew on, and you can't smoke in there. The songs sung burn my ears, no one stays on key. Perhaps I just approached it in the wrong way, you know, made it let me down. Seems to be the way it works, you know, sometimes I like to be let down, like burnt toast. It smells like burnt toast, you know, like in here, right now, with a hint of bad perfume. I like it when I can smell.

**Samos:** It does smell of burnt toast, that basement smells of some type of something I wouldn't eat, but I do like burnt toast, its good, dry, carcinogens, tasty, I'm sure it's actually kind of good for you. I think what goes on in there is strange,

ritual. The clothes they wear, the god  
they try to talk to; it's just strange,  
not off-putting, I can definitely see how  
someone could get  
mesmerized, choked by incense,  
to the point of blacking out.  
Everyone knows a lack of oxygen is bad for  
the brain  
Has to kill something up there, at least  
alter it  
Causes hallucinations, visions, death,  
Staring into a golden crucifix, spattered  
in blood, taken in  
Wanting to be held by the Madonna,  
Wanting to be sacrificed,

Flesh eaten by the world who are  
drunk on your blood.  
And sometimes it makes for better sex.

And then there is you, Mayfield, the  
one that killed, for cause, for my, and  
their personal safety, they look up to  
you, in a way, let you teach their  
children on a Sunday Morning, knowing full  
well you've killed, presumably, other men.  
I guess, one might say to their self, all  
ten commandments are equal, why not break  
them all?

*The food arrives, just as Samos ordered.  
The waiter asks if anything else is needed  
and sets a bottle of Tabasco on the table.*

**Mayfield:** Well I guess you're getting at  
something deeper. They accept it because,  
well, it's like a modern crusade. They  
shell out dollars, someone gets the  
swords, guns, ammunition, bunker busting  
bombs, the new and improved Napalm.  
They find you, lurking in poverty.  
They know you want out, they find a way;  
they give it to you.  
They say, you know, it's the service; it's  
what your father did.  
They inspect you, find out your mind's  
desires and play to them.  
I wouldn't call myself a victim though,  
that's too easy.  
They paid me, I did it, killed strangled  
stabbed the throats of men-young vitals  
exposed, ripped out, strained into the  
earth in massive graves. Rape was seen to  
some as a bonus;  
I couldn't do that.

*Waiter looks tense, disappears.*

**Samos:** So maybe you are a nice person?

**Mayfield:** Fuck nice, you can't be all  
that nice anymore, I just pay the girls I  
fuck.

**Samos:** I know what you mean.  
I walk down cold alley ways,  
Between the poor people houses,  
Where, too, I call my home.

I see others, make a nod,  
They act like they don't care.  
I guess there's something, hatred I'd call  
it,  
That any outside contact is probably out  
to kill them,  
Or maybe just emasculate them,  
Or inform them that they are just  
worthless.  
A constant wind blows trash through their  
minds,  
It's whipped in the wind, perhaps  
destroying their confidence, or giving  
them too much.  
I just keep walking, me and the others  
pretend with all of our strength that we  
don't care—that's what happens to nice.  
I'd say you're alright though, you know  
aside from all of that, you're easy to get  
along with.  
You smoke, drink, talk, ramble, shoot  
shit,  
Don't forget the intelligence factor,  
I'd say that's why you do, well, what you  
do.

*Samos finishes his eggs, sopping up yolk  
with the last of his toast. He slugs  
coffee. Mayfield looks at his last  
biscuit.*

**Mayfield:** You mean teaching, right?

**Samos:** For the most part, yes, I was  
talking about your small time career as a  
Sunday school teacher.

**Mayfield:** Yes, it's a good intellectual  
stimulation, but I approach it from a  
literary basis. God is simply a main  
character; Jesus is just another child of  
the gods, like Heracles to Zeus. Anyways,  
a good moral structure is good for anyone,  
as long as it doesn't, you know,  
turn into ideology.  
Dogma, ruled religion,  
Terror driven fire insurers,  
Who'd rather kill than save, or even  
ignore than understand.  
That's on the same level, destruction of  
alternative thoughts.  
Pervasive paranoia that seeps into every  
second of every minute, forcing your  
children to hate each other, fear one  
another,  
It may well be how all of these things  
start  
Was one mother or one father saying,  
"don't play with him,"  
Water into wine keeps most people drunk.

**Samos:** I'd like to be drunk. I was drunk  
last night, still trying to remember what  
went on. There's blood, dried blood, all  
over my shoe. It has to be blood, nothing  
else dries that way.



*Samos yanks his leg up, forcing his foot in the air and then onto the table, shaking their empty plates, inspecting it closely. The shoe, a chuck taylor, is for the most part clean save the blood.*

**Samos:** Darkened, layered, crusted, A smooth center—where the most of it stayed—is darkest, The spatters are more brown, used to be more red. They say that blood is blue when it's inside you, the veins look that way, but when it hurts, it's red. It's pretty simple.

*Samos lays some money down as if it doesn't matter to him.*

**Mayfield:** Where'd it come from, are there wounds on your body? Scratches, punctures, holes, blisterings, abrasions?

**Samos:** Not that I found, you know I looked, scoured myself, my flat, all of it. No blood, nowhere; it seems, it might have been there for a while, and I didn't know it.

*They leave. They leave to the left, going up the road.*

**Mayfield:** How often does one look at their shoes anyways?

**Samos:** I'm looking a lot more often now, Creating another routine, Recognizing the ridiculousness of habit, some chose to, Others, continue suffering, apparently, I've suffered, lost my blood Mayfield, my fucking blood, and I have gained no use from it.

**Mayfield:** At no point did you ever think the blood was from someone else? Perhaps you drained someone else's blood, pricked them with a blade, or cut them with paper, bled them out upon the ground, and your shoe just got in the way. Perhaps you are the killer, Samos. You are looking paler than usual, but I don't care if you killed, maimed or merely cut yourself.

**Samos:** I don't think it's on that level—it couldn't be, something that big I would remember.

*They walk up to a door, next to a run-down corner store. There is a "For Rent" sign. Samos' apartment is, maybe, a block away from the church and diner. Now, for sure, it is known that they live in a small town. The stairs leading up to Samos' flat are small, narrow, long. They only lead to one apartment. The keyhole is above the doorknob and is apparently stubborn to open. The door opens, it's a*

corner apartment—windows, front and back and one on the side. It's dusty, well lit—the dust hangs, floats, swirls when they walk through. Mayfield enters first; he sits on a hard-looking couch. Samos approaches the kitchen area, turns back and goes towards the bathroom. Mayfield approaches the turntable. One album cover is on the small, ash laden, stained table—the turntable and its receiver barely fit on this table. The record is already on the spindle—Mayfield starts it up, lays the needle down himself. There is banter over the music—

**Mayfield:** You've got to get more records, man.

*Samos makes a few mumbling sounds from beyond the bathroom door. Musical instruments are scattered about, leaning and dusty, some look, some have broken strings. An old stained brown baby grand piano is in the corner—it's covered with dust, liquor bottles (mostly pints and half pints) and some magazines (Playboys and something like New Yorker). Samos Enters.*

**Mayfield:** Well then what "level" of drunk were you, last night and the night before?

**Samos:** A level the same as most nights, notably more stoned the past few nights, as I recently got my check in the mail. I usually drink around a pint of hard liquor, whisky usually, brings my thoughts to a hard boil

They boil and flip and turn about, Necessity calls one or two at a time to the front of my mind.

I begin to take them apart, layer by layer like fucking onions.

Towards their middle they become hard, atomized in their true nature,

That's when the back of my head aches, as if I'm not supposed to think that far, that hard.

Then they retreat. I should write more of it all down, because, well, they disappear, only to resurface later.

Sometimes within moments, sometimes within days or longer.

Sometimes I fear they won't make it back before I die.

**Mayfield:** So you think you're going to die?

**Samos:** Maybe not right away, but it's hard to keep the blood inside of you, most of the time I wonder when I'll just let it all out, you know, string myself up and cut my own neck, those thoughts sometimes cease when I drink 'em down, and let the others surface. I had also been using

hash the last few nights—it was cheap and good, really fogged my mind, made me sleep hard and strange. I felt like I needed no other comforts—I woke up

Eyes stiff,  
Pulsing, hardened, pressured,  
Mind underwhelmed, confused, not hung-  
over.

Neck creaked when I moved it and those sounds and tensions resounded in my skull and down to my stomach, so I smoked more hash. I put it on a pin head, got a dirty dram glass. I found a piece of cardboard and stuck the pin through and applied the hash to it, like a brown-black globe atop the highest point of the universe. I salivated, lit the globe, let it burn for a few seconds and blew it out, covering it with the dram glass, letting it fill. I gulped it down—a smoking cocktail. My mind told me to get back in bed, so I did. You almost feel like an addict, the stuff is so strong. Stupefying.

Baudelaire's demon creeps in, almost invited.

The hilarity ceases for some moments, allowing good words to flow.

Talking to yourself brings great conversations.

Then something complete happens, like an orgasm,

like new born birth.

No thoughts cloud, because none exist.

All of that would be the level.

**Mayfield:** A pretty intense level, seems you went beyond.

**Samos:** Beyond what? Beyond desire, beyond permanence, beyond my own mind? Beyond alcohol and drugs? Beyond something normal?

**Mayfield:** I'm not sure, but definitely beyond, beyond your usual fuckedupness. Perhaps your drunken drug stupor you found some blood and it found your shoe? Or perhaps it doesn't even fucking matter, I'm not sure anyone died, or even anything.

**Samos:** I guess it doesn't matter anyways, what, then, is on your mind Mayfield?

**Mayfield:** It's so bright in here, why are you so pale?

**Samos:** I sleep most times when it's bright, save Sundays,

I like Sundays

Slow moving, enough for me to bear it, the brightness

Perhaps I just move to fast at other times,

But you have to keep up, right? Sundays, good days, have only one small problem

--liquor stores are closed, you know, have to keep church and state separated. And then, I guess alls you have to do is plan ahead.

But I have to hide it, the booze. From myself and my friends.

**Mayfield:** You have friends?

**Samos:** Well, yeah, I got you and the random girls I get drunk and fuck.

**Mayfield:** How often do I really drink your booze?

**Samos:** You're right.

*Mayfield pulls out a plastic sack, presumably full of marijuana; he fishes out a package of JOB 1.25s, the ones in the gold package, red and blue lettering. He grabs the one album cover from the table. Bob Dylan's Desire. He dumps out a joints worth of marijuana and it blends into the LP's green and brown cover. Mayfield seems to know exactly what he's doing. Samos grabs a Dewars pint bottle from near by, it has maybe two ounces of alcohol at its bottom.*

**Mayfield:** Don't you ever feel like you're raping them?

*Mayfield breaks up the marijuana, holding the LP at a tilt, letting fat brown seeds roll to the bottom, landing in his lap.*

**Samos:** No, they're whores anyway, you know, they are coming around, hanging out with me. I doubt any of them really like me or my conversation—I think they'd like me not to talk. Usually we sit and say nothing, FUCKING SILENCE. The recent one, Linda, makes most of her noises when we fuck—those are good noises. But no, to answer your question, I don't feel like I'm raping them or that they've been raped either.

*Samos chugs his scotch, gets up and walks to the kitchen area, fishing out a matchbox from what looks to be a breadbox.*

**Samos:** Add some hash to it Mayfield before you roll it up—it'll help.

*Mayfield obliges, taking a small lump of hash, about a gram, lighting it slightly with his lighter, letting it cool and crumbles it into the small white envelope he has created. He finishes rolling the number, flipping it to Samos. Mayfield takes the remnants and the seeds on his lap and puts them in an ash tray. Samos lights the joint. They smoke, taking inhalations, passing back and forth.*

*Mayfield is instantly different, paranoia has crept in, he welcomes it though it seems to belittle him. He goes to the bathroom to escape Samos' strangeness. Samos doesn't stir.*

**Samos:** Don't worry, there's great reading material in there.

**Mayfield:** I'm sure. I've got a lot on my mind anyway.

*Mayfield opens the door to the bathroom, retrieves his cigarettes from his pocket, extracts one, shuts the door, pulls his pants down to his boots and sits down on the toilet.*

**Mayfield:** He asks so many questions,  
leaving no time for responses,  
    Might be trying to break me down  
    Or maybe just pass his own time  
    Work out questions in his own mind,  
    Let them out, follow their trails,  
    Set them aside to look at, examine  
    I'm only an observer, a visitor to  
his exhibit,  
    Like a child arranging small items on  
his dresser  
    His space, the church he's created

*Mayfield looks for an ashtray, the window usually doesn't budge. He looks around;*

*in the bathtub is a young woman—she's curled up, lifeless. She has somewhat dried blood caked in her hair. Mayfield takes a moment, ashes his cigarette in the sink. He takes a few more puffs, wets the cigarette in the faucet's stream and throws the cigarette on the floor. Mayfield uses the toilet paper, flushes and walks out the door and takes his seat.*

**Mayfield:** What's with the girl?

**Samos:** The dead one?

**Mayfield:** Yeah, I'd say she's dead.

**Samos:** She was there this morning, it's Linda. You know, she was quiet, maybe hiding something. Looks to me like she shot herself; I don't think I shot her.  
    I hate those damn things  
    You know guns,  
    Cold death,  
    Like instant.  
    Sends you to the next life for sure.  
    Don't feel bad for it.  
    Maybe she was in a bad way.

**Mayfield:** I'm going for a walk, if you'd like to go. It's sunny.

**Samos:** When I smoke this stuff, I like to get back into bed, if you don't mind. Looks a bit bright out there anyways.

*Samos lights a cigarette and Mayfield collects his dope and papers and heads for the door, slowly, as if he is taking it all in. He goes down the stairs and out the door, heading down the streets and back towards the church, the diner, and that side of town.*

**Mayfield:** I've had enough responsibility for a Sunday.

                  He's right,  
                  It is slow moving,  
                  When you get past the  
comfort of morning.

**Child:** Hello Mr. Mayfield!

**Mayfield:** Peter, good day for a walk through the gates, eh?

**Child:** Suppose so.

*Mayfield walks on, the child goes the other way. Mayfield lights another cigarette as he passes through the limestone and iron gates leading to a city park. The sky is green.*

*Darkness overtakes the stage.*

*The End*

## *The Hand that Watches Me Draw*

Lisa Siefker Bailey



# *The Color of the Sky*

Fabiola Cabrera

The sunny Monday came near my shadow  
As I walked toward school,  
Smiley face with shiny black shoes,  
Gray ironed skirt and white clean socks;  
My sky was blue.

But, I swallowed my own fear,  
When I got into the third world,  
As I squeezed my mom's hand  
Angels with dirty faces approached.

Toothless smiles without a shade  
As they ran down in the main street  
muddy barefoot, the smell of spoiled food,  
and a creased pain.  
Their sky wasn't blue.

Useless bundles,  
Juggling oranges in red lights.  
Mom said to me "Do not talk to strangers!  
Even if he or she is only a child."

*I wonder what color is the sky  
in the odor of a rotten place,  
Where the sewers and the rats  
Are your only friends.*

They're younger and older,  
Bad breath, but bread-less;  
Staring at me,  
With black holes in their eyes,  
An empty belly and a lonely heart.

Toxic running through their noses,  
Raising hands for *un peso*  
A voice came from my throat  
"I feel sorry for them..."

Rags of hunger, tears without water  
Washing cars, cleaning shoes,  
And mother concluded  
"Keep walking, is not our problem!"

*I wonder, how many steps  
I need to make, in order to forget  
the dirty angels.*

Stealing wallets  
Rain without a roof,  
Asking for a place to live,  
Feet without a pair of shoes.

And I just keep walking towards school  
Ignoring tears and gloomy soreness  
Listening to my mother's words  
Looking at my lunch box  
Feeling ashamed of my privileges.

*And I wonder, if we all really share  
That same sky blue.*

## *Just*

Mike Fry

born into this world  
on a pull – then pushed  
back into a hole  
stuck in a thing  
on a whole  
getting wrapped up  
wound up  
in this whirlwind  
twisted beginning to an end  
an end to another  
friend  
i was too attached  
thought of baby love  
about to hatch  
keep spreading my wings  
though their like an  
old pair of tattered  
blue jeans  
that need to be patched

Just want to  
let the soul fly free  
now it's scared to the ground  
i realize – i'm Just me  
looking for beauty  
In things the need  
to be found  
my heart  
ain't made for flings  
whole love  
wants to fly  
but past keep becoming present  
and I didn't ask why

running away from time  
does time keep running  
bye  
done with it – time  
Just let me die



Just – Just me  
Just – Just us  
would be Justice  
that fair treatment  
ruled with  
an iron fist  
that due reward  
was Just  
Just missed  
time after time  
can't play or  
fast-forward  
Just rewind

see, the problem  
with a whole thing  
trusting in exact  
loving someone  
as something  
my soul is set in flight  
Just can't react

born on a rope  
with a pull  
and a twist  
trusting in love  
with hope  
but there is no  
such Justice

## *Lucinda*

Joe Land

"I'm leaving today...there's enough food in the fridge for a couple of weeks, and I've paid the next three month's rent."

"So you're coming back in three months?" she said.

"No, what I mean is you have three months to get your shit together, I'm not coming back."

"Not even for your things?"

"I loaded it all up last night while you were passed out. You can have the furniture. I don't need it."

"Why?"

"Don't even think to wonder why. You know why. I guess I'll just tell you, if you really want to know."

"Tell me; I deserve to know," she said.

"I owe you nothing. I'm leaving because you're an addict; your soul has wasted away; you don't know how to love any more." He picked up his coffee and headed out the door, not even angry enough to slam it.

She didn't care. She walked over to the kitchen drawer and got herself a piece of foil. She was kind of happy.

# *Where Have You Been, Anastasia Zenith?*

Oshu Huddleston

“There is a Mr. McLachlan on the phone for you, Alec,” Beth said to me. She clutched the telephone like she was jealously presenting me with an Academy Award. I took the phone as I searched my memory for a Mr. McLachlan.

“Mr. Avery?” A deep, purposeful, and unfamiliar voice asked for confirmation.

“This is he,” I replied. I expected it to be another bill collector. The recent lay-off from back-busting physical labor had been devastating for us. We were in our early thirties, on the path to our hopes and dreams becoming reality, and then we were derailed. Beth wondered how we would ever get back on track. *I* wondered what they would take away from us this time.

“I’m the attorney for Miss Anastasia Zenith,” the voice said. The name jolted through me. At once, my stomach turned and my eyes brightened at the mere mention of the name. The attorney’s following words set my head spinning in a frenzy of emotion. “She has passed away.”

Anastasia had named me as the executor of her will and I was to immediately and personally meet with her attorney, Mr. McLachlan. I asked Beth to come along so I could explain a few things, especially why a woman whose name she had never heard had asked me to settle her affairs.

“Alec, is she a long, lost, rich aunt, I hope?” Beth asked as we drove to meet Mr. McLachlan at the airport. “I hope?” She took a nonchalant approach to our monetary troubles.

“Hardly,” I said. “I haven’t heard the name Anastasia Zenith for twenty-two years.” Beth looked me over with complete disbelief.

“Who is she *really*?” Beth squinted to perpetuate her mistrust. She had previously suggested that during the couple of months I had been unemployed, I *must* be seeing someone else while she is at Rusty’s Eateria, waitressing hard. I tried to shrug off her paranoia and attributed it to stress from the state of our finances.

“She was my first girlfriend...” I said, and paused in expectation of another snide comment from Beth, “...when I was eleven years old.” I knew there was no way I could have convinced her that I had no contact with Anastasia since then. Beth gazed out of the passenger side window of the car and refused to speak to me until we arrived at the airport.

I used that quiet time to organize my jumbled thoughts. Twenty-two years ago, Anastasia was my whole world. It was complete puppy love for me. She was the prettiest girl I had ever seen, and she “liked” me unconditionally. I gave up Little League so that I could spend more time basking in her presence. Then she and her whole family vanished. I silently assumed that they moved back to whatever European country they were from and I never heard from Anastasia again. So how could she put me in charge of her will? What happened to her? Where has she been? Mr. McLachlan gave me very little detail. He simply told me that I was in charge of Anastasia’s estate and that he would be flying in from New York that afternoon so that we could discuss the next step. I had no reason to disbelieve; how could anyone come up with this sort of connection between Anastasia and me? Beth was all for it because of the idea that we had inherited money. I agreed with that notion, but despite our fiscal woes, I was more concerned about why Anastasia would name *me*. What had happened during the past twenty-two years that she would think of *me* when composing her will?

We arrived at the airport and Beth stated that “we better get *something* out of this.” I was sure Beth imagined Anastasia as my secret mistress who had left me her fortune as a gesture of her love. I, as usual, shoved the preposterous notion to the side. Mr. McLachlan asked to meet at the bar/sports lounge/restaurant, so we made our way there as I tried to ignore Beth’s wildly baseless accusations.

We anxiously waited for an hour or so when a short, young man in a black suit and bright red tie approached us. He leaned to one side as he walked, as if the briefcase in his right hand weighed him down.

“This could be him,” I said to Beth, who had already absorbed two vodka and tonics and was enthralled with an infomercial starring beautiful people who wore extremely tight shorts in order to sell oddly shaped exercise equipment.

“Alec Avery?” The man’s voice matched the one on the telephone, but the voice did not match the man. “I’m James McLachlan, attorney for the estate of Anastasia Zenith.” I shook his hand and he motioned toward a private booth in the restaurant area. I followed and sat across from him as he carefully positioned his briefcase. Beth stayed at the bar.

“I need you to sign. . .” Mr. McLachlan said as he pulled several papers from his briefcase, “. . .these.” He laid the papers on the table in front of me and began sorting more.

“I’m not sure what is going on here,” I said. “Why would she have *me* as. . .”

“I don’t know, Mr. Avery,” Mr. McLachlan said. “It is not my job to understand the reasoning. It is my job to have the proper forms filled out and Ms. Zenith’s wishes fulfilled.”

“Wishes fulfilled?” I asked.

“Ms. Zenith entrusted me with a list of tasks she wished to be performed upon the event of her death,” Mr. McLachlan said.

“How did she die?” I asked.

Mr. McLachlan slowly raised his face to look at mine. He was obviously trying to process my question as he gathered the papers he had laid out for me to sign. “You don’t know?” He swiftly scooted the papers into a pile at the side of the table. “Mr. Avery, did you even know that she was ill?” He leaned in, ready to interrogate me further.

“Honestly,” I said, “I had not even heard Anastasia’s name since we were kids.”

“Hm,” Mr. McLachlan said. “This is peculiar.”

“No kidding,” I said. “When I was eleven years old, Anastasia disappeared from my life and I never heard from her again.”

“I can certainly understand your puzzlement then,” Mr. McLachlan said. I nodded in agreement, and he nodded in agreement to my agreement. We sat, nodded, and pondered for a moment. I noticed that Beth had found a juke box in the corner of the lounge and was investigating the selections.

“What do you do, Mr. Avery?” Mr. McLachlan asked. “For a living.”

I questioned for a moment why he would ask me, but answered anyway.

“I’m unemployed at the moment. Lay-off.”

“Oh,” said Mr. McLachlan. He looked down at the table and folded his hands.

“I was a foreman at a quarry until the recent lay-off,” I said to assure him. “Not my dream job, but it definitely kept us in our house.”

“Yes, dreams,” Mr. McLachlan said. He peered into the shining, black marble table-top.

I thought there might be more, so I waited a moment.

“What about dreams?” I asked.

“Well, as far as Miss Zenith’s instructions go,” Mr. McLachlan said, “they begin with a simple statement: ‘Dreams.’” He presented a photocopied, handwritten letter from his briefcase.

I was instantly washed away in a sea of beloved memories I had locked away long ago. The handwriting was Anastasia's, and I recognized the strokes as no different as in the purposefully folded love letters of so many years ago. For a moment, all I could see on the page was 'Ana loves Alec' surrounded by a trail of Xs and Os that bent into a heart shape. Mr. McLachlan began reading from the original copy of the letter, sealed in a shield of plastic.

"Dreams. The ones we followed, how do we know they were the right ones?" Mr. McLachlan stopped to wave a waitress to the table.

"Coffee please? Black." The waitress glanced at me for a full five seconds before she scurried away to fill the order.

"The dreams that we had, that we buried away as children, can they yet still live on? Alec Avery, do you remember these dreams that we had? Are you living them? Are you pursuing them? If you became at all like me, you did not chase these dreams..."

The waitress returned with Mr. McLachlan's coffee. "Thank you." He took a hefty gulp of the steaming brew, and I could only assume he had done such so often that he could no longer feel such scalding pain. He breathed a sigh of satisfaction and steam.

"If you became at all like me, you did not chase these dreams...you are not chasing these dreams." Mr. McLachlan stopped, puzzled."Do you know what she is talking about here, Mr. Avery?"

I had already been searching my mind. I had nothing. It was nearly a lifetime ago. Children dream of so much...I dreamed of so much as a kid, but I was at a total loss as to what dreams Anastasia was referring to. "I'm not sure."

"Make these dreams a reality, Alec, and what I have is yours," Mr. McLachlan read aloud. He seemed as genuinely confused as I was. "Of course, it is signed 'Anastasia Zenith.'"

Beth had obviously chosen Don McLean's version of "Your Cheatin' Heart" on the juke box. She pointed at me and began lip

synching. The waitress returned to check on the content of Mr. McLachlan's coffee cup, to which he waved her off with a gesture above his cup. The waitress once again gave me her maximum of five seconds to order something, and she vanished.

"The next instruction is for us to go to the last place you had seen Anastasia Zenith," Mr. McLachlan said, as if this was the easiest of instructions...as if we could walk across the airport terminal and be there.

"The last place I saw her," I said, "was on a playground in my hometown."

"Great," Mr. McLachlan said. "No problem. We can travel to there and continue to the next part of Miss Zenith's instructions."

I laughed and realized that I had not thought of the place where I grew up for many years.

"It's funny?" Mr. McLachlan laughed. He raised an eyebrow inquisitively.

"My home town burnt to the ground seventeen years ago," I said. This wasn't entirely true, though. The town was prone to repeated wildfires, the cause of which at the time was a true mystery. Every couple of years fires would break out in nearby fields and forests, no matter how wet or dry the seasons had been. The ground underneath stood at a higher temperature. Geologists later theorized that a network of caves and tunnels underneath the town were responsible, with reams of coal that had ignited long ago. It was far too dangerous an expedition to investigate those tunnels, though, and scientists proposed that the government evacuate the town. So they did. My family moved away a couple of years before the town was razed, but I heard much later that what was left of the town had been torn down. All that remained was miles of streets and highways, connecting to empty, crumbled lots.

In the past, whenever I had told the tale of my ill-fated hometown, my listener's jaw would drop in disbelief, and then they would have to go look it up for themselves. I admit that it was too

bizarre a story to instantly believe. The internet was a fantastic source of overhead pictures of what used to be my hometown. . .now a ghostly grid of broken blacktop and crooked lines. But Mr. McLachlan didn't budge when I explained.

"Interesting," Mr. McLachlan said.

After dropping off an indignant Beth at home, we drove my perpetually-degenerating-but-well-used 1973 Chevy Impala the hundred or so miles to the site of my hometown. Conversation was scarce along the way. The silence made me wary of turning on the radio, as if it would break the somber meditation Mr. McLachlan seemed incredibly serious about. He simply stared at the roadway. I spent most of the drive thinking about my childhood and the place I grew up, how it would feel to finally see that it is no longer there.

And it wasn't. Positioned at the outskirts of the town were warning signs posted by the United States government that the area was not safe to travel in, much less live in. I stopped the car next to the warning signs and stepped out. I looked across the landscape that seemed almost post-apocalyptic. There were miles of nothing but dark, bare land, save the cracked and ruptured roads that once made up the town's streets. Steam and smoke were pushed out of fissures in the earth and spiraled into the sky. A heavy fog hung above the tree line like a gray wool blanket. There was a definite gloom and heaviness in the air, and it took my breath. I was left with a deep, empty feeling simply looking at a place that used to be something so much more in my earlier days. Something special had been taken from me as I looked at not so much what *is*, but more at what *used to be*.

"This is it?" Mr. McLachlan said. "Where is the playground?"

"Obviously, Mr. McLachlan," I said, "it is no more. It is hard to go to the playground when it no longer exists."

"Where is the former site of the playground, then?" Mr. McLachlan asked.

"I don't know," I said. I was getting aggravated at Mr. McLachlan's apparent indifference about the devastation of the place I grew up.

"Can you not follow the street signs?" Mr. McLachlan asked.

I glanced harshly at Mr. McLachlan for a moment, and then I peered into the wasteland to see that he was right. I laughed weakly when I saw that despite the razing of everything else in town, the street signs remained in their proper places.

"Why on earth would we need to know where we're going if there is nowhere to go?" I asked, overcome with a mix of emotions.

"Miss Zenith certainly thinks there is somewhere to go," Mr. McLachlan said. With his demeanor, I couldn't discern whether or not he had found something poignant in all of this or he simply wanted to complete what Anastasia requested of him.

I scoured my memory for street names. I did my best to recall what was on the corner of Washington and Violet, and the memories rushed in. I remembered that Parson's Laundry Service sat across from Liberty Arcade, where I spent much time and saved quarters. I remembered that my house was on Northam, just two and a half blocks back from the arcade. I remembered that the playground where Ana and I spent our time together was visible from my bedroom window, just half a block away. Mr. McLachlan and I walked along the deserted streets of my hometown, him seeing the reality and me seeing my childhood. We walked from the outskirts of town to the former site of the Greatwood Park playground. For about fifteen minutes, I lived in my old hometown, in my childhood, both of which were long gone.

"This is it," I said. Mr. McLachlan nodded. We stood in silence for a notable period of time until I realized that I had no clue what came next according to Anastasia.

"What now?" I asked, genuinely puzzled.

Mr. McLachlan knelt to the roadway and sat down his briefcase, which he had been carrying the entire time. I imagine that it

would normally be an unusual site to see a man, dressed in a suit, briefcase in hand, wandering through a deserted wasteland.

He opened his briefcase and produced from it a shovel of the camping gear variety, the kind that folds neatly in half. He held it up to me as if I was expecting it.

“Here,” Mr. McLachlan said.

I took the shovel from him. The moment I grasped the shovel, though, I knew what had to be done. The last time I stood on the playground, I had a shovel in hand. It was the same day I saw Anastasia for the last time. It was that day that Anastasia and I made a small time capsule out of an old music box. We each wrote something for the other and placed it inside, careful to not peek. On the outside of the box, we wrote the date and ‘not to be opened for 20 years - - - Ana & Alec.’

I then spent hours digging in various spots. I reconstructed the playground in my mind, the best my memory would allow. I tried to picture where the see-saws were, the set of swings next to that, the monkey bars nearby. There was a tree off-center from the playground, and not five feet from there was where we placed the makeshift time capsule. Anastasia and I had dug a hole four feet deep, carefully placed the music box in, and covered it up. We then sat on the merry-go-round for a few minutes, and she walked away forever.

Soon enough, I found the music box. The tiny lid creaked open, then broke off in my hand. If that was not heartbreaking enough, music no longer played when the lid opened. Inside the box were two purposefully folded notes. I carefully unfolded one as it started crumbling apart, but it didn’t matter. The ink that the notes were written in had faded long ago. Neither note had any trace of writing.

Up to that point I had a certain anxiety and excitement about this trip down memory lane, courtesy of Anastasia Zenith. I suppose I had hoped that there was something at the end of this twisted

rainbow, but there was nothing. There was emptiness and disappointment. My anxiety was replaced with a sadness I had never felt before. My childhood was officially gone in every sense possible. The Anastasia that I had known was officially erased for good.

“What did you write?” Mr. McLachlan asked.

I was startled. I had forgotten that Mr. McLachlan was even still there. I contained myself, on the verge of tears.

“What does it matter?” I said. “It’s gone.”

“We’re at the final item on Miss Zenith’s list,” Mr. McLachlan said. “‘Alec reads his note aloud.’ The two of you agreed to write down something in a note that expressed your greatest dream.”

I looked at the broken box I had tossed to the ground and recalled the words I had written for Anastasia.

“Right here, right now,” I recited. “Always and forever.”

She was my first love, and no matter how innocent it was, no matter how little I understood the concept of love, it still hurt when she disappeared after that day. I suppressed all my hurt and anger over it throughout the rest of my childhood and teenage years, until I met Beth. Beth made me forget all about it.

“I have to go,” Mr. McLachlan said.

“Wait, what?” I said.

“Miss Zenith’s note. This is what she wrote to you,” Mr. McLachlan said. “‘I have to go. I have to move away, but one day I’ll find you again, and we’ll stand here on this playground and read this note together.’”

The drive back home was long and silent. Mr. McLachlan offered to do the driving back, which was gracious of him, considering I’d be lost in thought. I walked him to the airport terminal and he explained the final steps of Anastasia’s wishes before flying back to his offices, where I would soon have to meet him to finalize everything.

Anastasia had a large house on some valuable property in Europe. She was an art dealer and collector. She studied art in college and found a great love for it. She had travelled to hundreds of countries and made deals with thousands of people for billions of dollars worth of art. She made commissions off of her sales that left her very wealthy. She had been courted by many men over the years, but chose instead to remain alone. She chose to leave all of her worldly possessions to 'Alec Avery, for him to do with whatever his heart desires.'

I was overwhelmed. I was unsure of how to progress from that point, and I explained to Mr. McLachlan that I would have to talk to my wife, Beth, before taking further steps.

"Miss Zenith," Mr. McLachlan said, "said specifically that Beth need not be involved in any decisions regarding this. What happens now depends solely on your decisions, Mr. Avery."

And there it was. Had Anastasia returned so many years later, only to find me married and living a life completely unlike what we dreamed of on the playground? Had disappointment in me left Anastasia closed away in her house, her career, her art? Regardless, I stood to inherit everything Anastasia accomplished in life, and I simply could not fathom accepting it as my own. I didn't have the right to. What would I do, though?

I would accept the inheritance and meander through my life, not accomplishing much of anything. My dreams in life would still not come true. My bitter wife would eventually kill me with a devilishly planned household accident...she would never get over the idea of Anastasia as my secret lover. Paranoia and greed would drive Beth to the brink of madness, and to both of our demises.

Or perhaps, instead, Anastasia's impressive home would be razed to the ground, and the first of many playgrounds built in its place, a public area for playing and dreaming, with a dedication on the outskirts reading "In Memory of Anastasia Zenith. Where have YOU been?"

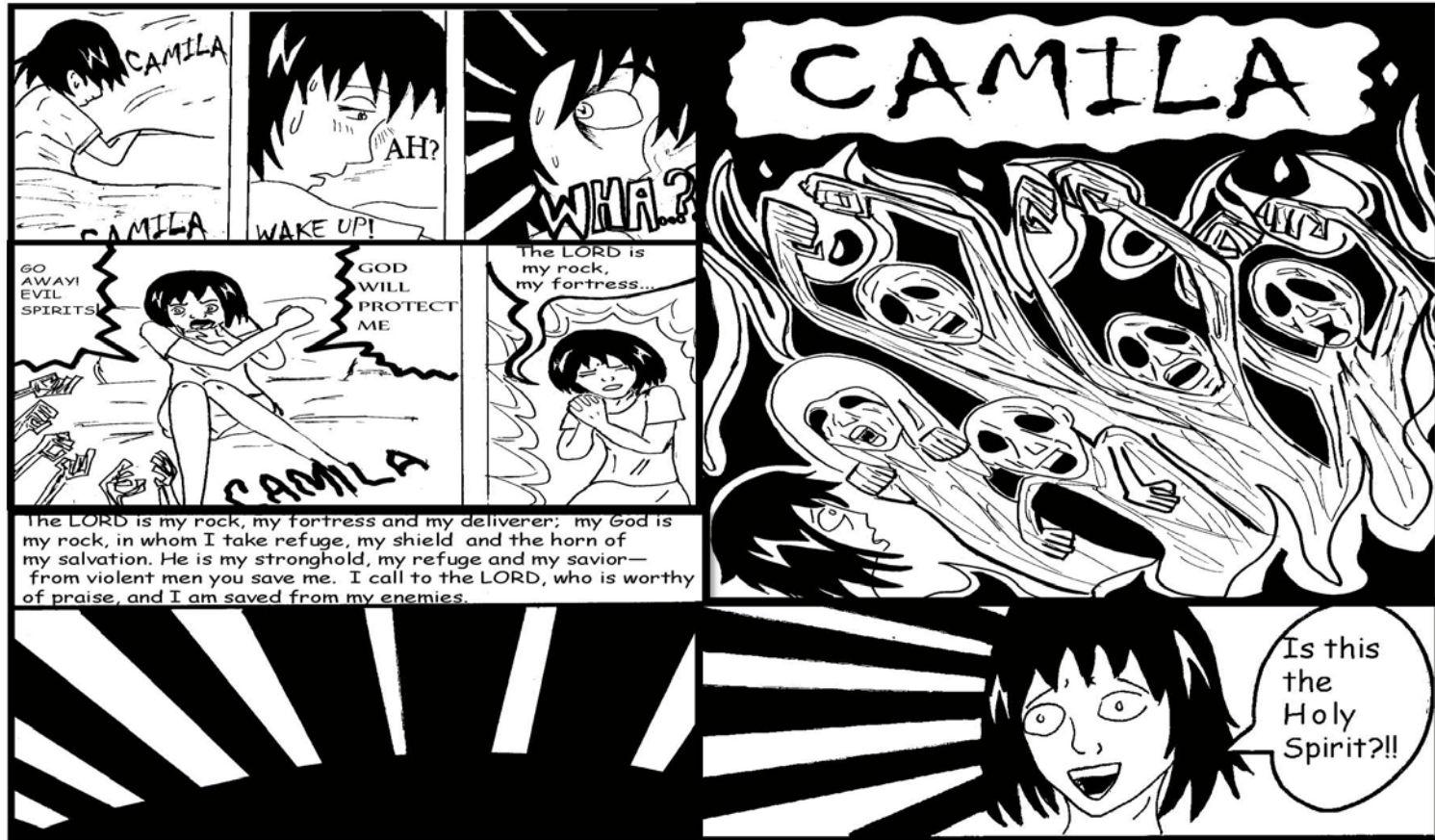
## *Draw Rein, Draw Breath*

Robert Stilwell

Who could feel certain that we were not healed,  
Left steadfast, somehow brightened  
By changings that we took for ruin? Our mirrors,  
Shattered to blades, lie strewn  
Across a full-moon snow. Each road  
Resembling autumn has become,  
At last, far drearier seasons. Be healed;  
Be steadfast; and somehow brightened. I  
. . . but nothing. A little like William James,  
When he waited in a musty séance rooms,  
On Friday evenings that mingled fakery  
With eeriness, we can distinguish,  
Or almost think we do, the timbres of our dead,  
Who are, themselves,  
Changings that we might take for ruin,  
Then truly recognize. Our broken reflections  
Sort at new glittery multiplying. Our night  
Road narrows. We have been invited  
To come away from the unearthly light  
Of earth and will accept  
Entirely. But not yet  
And not yet. No, not yet . . .

*Excerpt from "Camila: Ticket to Hell"*

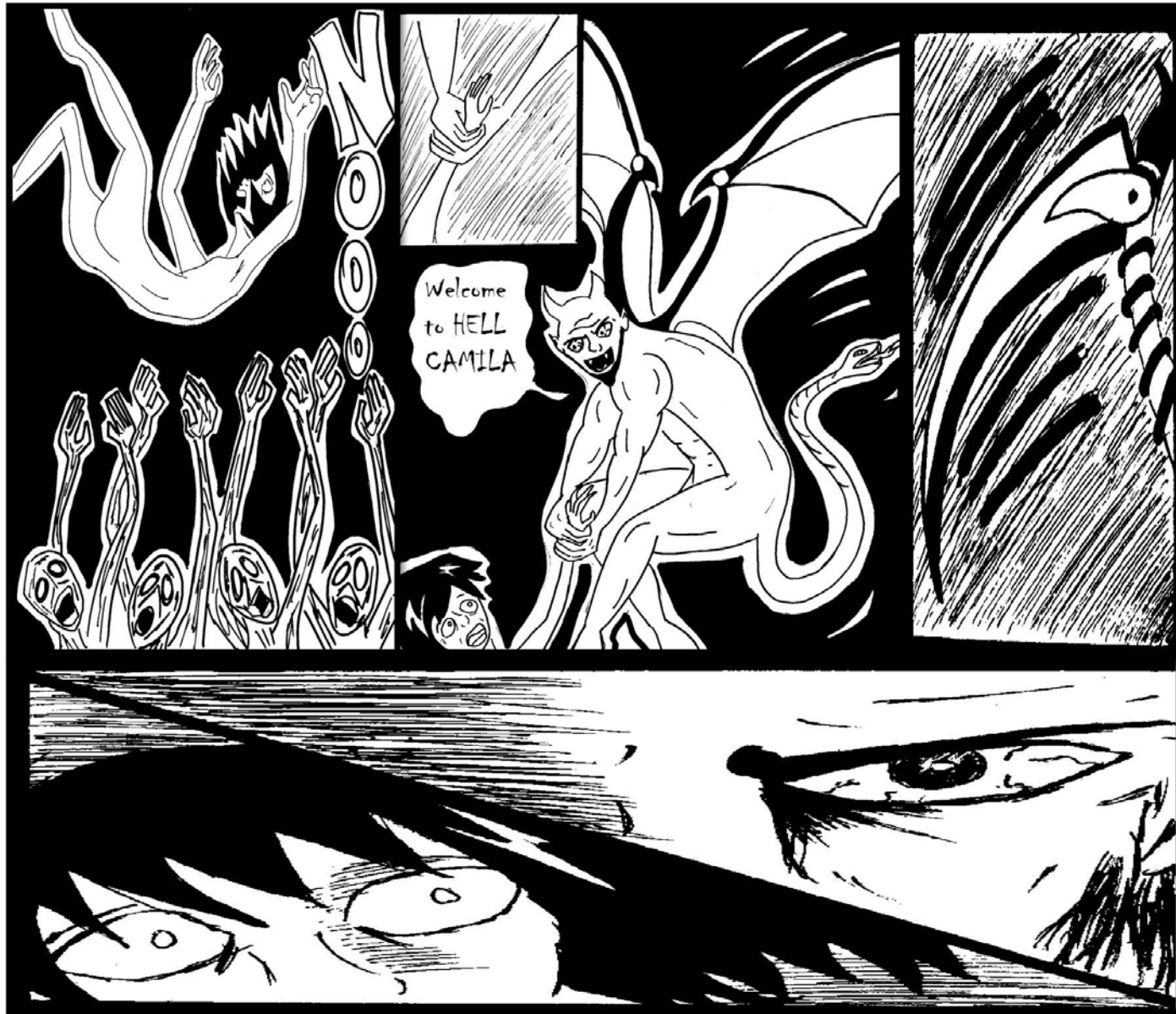
Fabiola Cabrera



The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior— from violent men you save me. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.









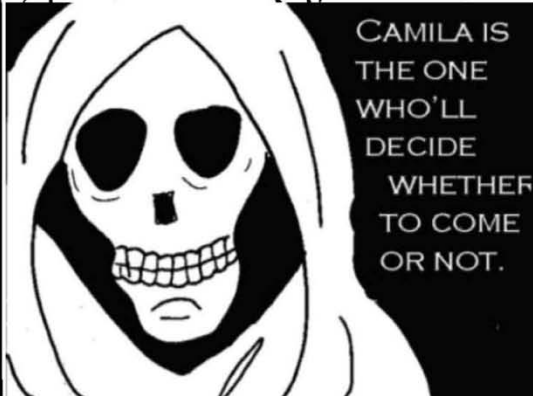
**STOP  
LUCIFER!**



I know, but  
whenever her time  
comes, she'll  
come to ME.



IT'S NOT  
HER TIME  
YET...



CAMILA IS  
THE ONE  
WHO'LL  
DECIDE  
WHETHER  
TO COME  
OR NOT.

# *The Bird*

Roseanne M Gordon

He sits on a branch, swaying in the slight breeze  
He flaps his wings and looks up, through the depths of the tree

And there he sees far above the great boughs,  
There floats on the wind a small grey cloud

As he watches the cloud is joined by others of its kind  
Till in the wake of the small puff, a great black mass follows behind

He tilts his head in wonder as, from his perch on high,  
He sees the thunderheads rolling in, darkening the once blue sky

And as the breeze starts to rush through the tree and it begins to sway,  
He thinks, "Maybe I'll just wait here for this storm to blow away"

But the tree is tossed back and forth by the wind  
And is given no choice but to yield to it and soon it starts to bend

He looks around at his once peaceful world  
Where objects of all shape and size are indiscriminately hurled

Where the wind pushes and the rain beats  
And threatens to dethrone him from his lofty seat

"If only I could find a place untouched by this strife,  
Beyond the reach of the clouds where I can continue my life"

So to find this place he decides to take flight  
And sets forth on his journey through the dim light

As he strikes out on his path with his wings outspread,  
The great storm follows after, in the sky overhead

Threatening with each lightening bolt ending in a loud booming sound,  
To make him fall and there to stay, forever on the rain soaked ground

And still he pushes on; fighting with all that he has,  
To find some place of safety until this storm might pass

Soon it seems that his strength is spent, that he has given all he's got  
And must forsake the hope of ever finding a safe haven and a resting spot

But there over the hill, he sees a tall cherry tree in full bloom  
With blossoms gaily and gently swaying, unknowing of impending doom

Soon the storm will be upon him, he can feel it close behind  
And another place where he might shelter it is doubtful he will find

To stay aloft and out distance the storm, or to settle, he must choose  
And must weigh in the balance that with the wrong choice, tonight his life he might lose

He longs so much to just drift down and rest on a deeply protected limb  
To let go and let some stronger being out last the storm, would that be such a sin?

If he stays on the wing it is him alone who decides his fate, if he falls it is his own fault  
"At least if I get thrown from the sky it is I myself who brings my life to a halt"

"But would it be so terrible to admit that there are things stronger than me,  
Not only dark, deadly things, but beautiful ones like that lone cherry tree?"

He must decide to continue or give someone else the power of his fate  
But as he hovers, glancing to and fro, it seems at last to be too late

A great lightening bolt in all of its fury strikes out, forcing the clouds to retreat  
Like a venomous snake, causing everything around to wither with the scorching heat

He is falling, falling, turning end over end; he has taken too long to decide  
He thought he was strong, and could do it all himself, but has been punished for his pride

As he falls he looks up once more, though his sight is growing dim,  
And through his distorted glass of vision, he sees the great tree reach out and gather him in

He uses his last vestige of strength to right himself and look through its blossom covered top  
As far above the thunder answers its master, though now only as a muffled pop

And there he stays until this day, safely sheltered by the faithful timber  
And if ever he thinks that he is fine on his own, it only takes a rumble to make him remember

## *Tree Frogs*

Peter Oren

This bright guitar pick is a worn triangle  
Of compressed rainforest frogs,  
Rounded at the edges for the player's comfort.  
The names the machines pressed on  
Have gone with the chirps of the frogs,  
But those frogs provide a new chirping sensation  
With the Brazilian rosewood they once  
Called home.  
The holder can still see a small, faint "USA"  
Printed on the plastic in gold.

Colors like these are not native  
To these lands or  
This bluegrass player's hands,  
But this is 'merica,  
And they are here now.

## *The Man in the Corner*

Oshu Huddleston

I arrived at home after a long, tiring day of scaling mountains of paperwork at the office. I welcomed the sight of my wife and son, who were enjoying some evening television.

"Be sure to phrase your answers in the form of a question," I said. I received a half-hearted hello from the both of them, and I proceeded upstairs to fulfill the goal I set for myself as I left the office: a bubble bath.

I did not do it often, but when I did, all of my troubles in the world seemed to fade away with the bubbles as they dissolved. The stress and the workload I endured at work seemed not worth my meager salary, but once I relaxed in my bath, there *was* no price that could replace that feeling of total relaxation.

I stripped myself nude as the hot water filled the tub, along with bubbles that entertained a melon essence. I slid into the bubbles down to my neck, which concealed me under a mysterious wasteland of watermelon-odor bubbles. It was not until I cleared my eyes of the bubbly debris that I saw...*him*...leaning against the wall, in the corner of the bathroom.

I could say nothing at first. My mind wandered among the possibilities that brought the mysterious man to interrupt my most sacred of relaxations. He stood motionless, sunglasses shielding his eyes from view. I was not sure if he had noticed that *I* had noticed *him* yet. The fact that he was wearing black and gray urban camouflage seemed quite silly to me at that moment, but he *did* manage to sneak into my home and position himself.

"What do you want?" I asked. There was no nervous tone in my voice, but simply a curiosity. I was amazed that I managed to not notice him up to that point. Had he stood there and watched me undress? Surely he did. Then he watched me unload the bath salts

that made my paradise of a bath, all the while unmoving. I had no idea what it was he was waiting for.

I noticed the ridged hunting knife that was strapped to his right thigh. A small caliber pistol was strapped to his left ankle. The black ski mask blocked any perception I might have made about his mood and thoughts. He held no weapon in his hands, so I knew he would have to reach for the knife or the gun. I thought that if he made a move for either, it would be my only opportunity to stop him.

But he remained motionless.

"Are you here to kill me?" I asked, not expecting an answer. The possible assassin remained silent in the corner. I thought that perhaps he had arrived to stop me from finishing the paperwork regarding some sensitive materials my boss had given me. I knew that my work was covert and significant, but I never thought that it would result in a hired gun lurking in the corner of my bathroom.

My potential murderer glared at me.

I tried hard to recall what information I could possibly possess that would result in my premature demise, but nothing came to mind. The man was serious. His crooked features that I could actually make out displayed an obvious lack of sense of humor, and a hungry need to get his job done. Was *this* job? Would taking me out fulfill his wishes and goals?

Then it occurred to me that, since he had yet to strike, perhaps he wished to hurt those close to me instead. I had no more than leaned forward when I heard when I heard footsteps trotting up the stairs. They were the playful footsteps of my son.

Was the assassin here to kill my first born? Was he here to ruin my existence via those that I held most dear? I held it bizarre that at that point I could not vocalize a warning to my boy, as he entered the bathroom, unaware.

"Daddy?" My boy said as he entered, anticipating that I would be in my most relaxed of states. As he stepped into the

dangerous vicinity of the man in the corner, I could do nothing but hold my breath.

The man in the corner held fast. He did not reach for the knife on his thigh, nor did he reach for the gun strapped to his ankle. In that small stretch of time, I was relieved and felt that my son was not the target of the killer.

"There he is," my son said. He grasped the man in the corner with one hand and lifted him from the corner of the tub.

"Dad, were you playing with my toys again?" My son asked, a sly grin spreading across his face. I watched as my son picked the assassin up from his ideal location in the corner of the tub, next to a bar of soap.

"I suppose I was," I said.

## *Odd*

Tammy Sue Burton

Frequently I observe from           afar

Odd how people act-

Unaware that someone's looking,

Always so matter of fact,

Vigilant in their daily tasks

Odd what people do-

Habitually reciprocate

Not contemplating I, denying-you.

Predictable is each move

Odd that people do not notice-

Systematically do not acknowledge the name,

Is it Tom, Bill, or Otis?

Why are they occupied?

Odd how people are-

Ascend each day in routine,

Breakfast, shower, the car,

Peaks my curiosity alerts my senses

Odd what people say-

No suspicion of my heeding,

Just turn the other way,

No declaration of the nearness

Odd that people live-

A host of vagabonds wandering random,

With oh so little to give,

Only restricted existence thereby

Odd how people separate-

Remote the mortals all around-

Attentiveness-vacate

# *College town with coffee*

Joe Land

Two guys done with chess, coffee and silence  
A Charlie-eyed short hair with a fade reads an old French dictionary  
It looks that way  
Laptops, bowls, cups and mugs  
    A short flicker of the lights  
    No one falters, no one stumbles  
No one misses a sip  
I take a drink, an opportunity to look out  
At their collective study—it rises and falls  
Moving closer like a dog wanting  
His belly scratched and can't manage to  
Get up all the way to approach his companion  
She's pretty, I like the way her eyes seem overwhelmed,  
    Or maybe she's caught me trying to steal her portrait  
Onto my paper.

It wouldn't matter too much  
    It would inspire me to pursue  
To talk, to embrace cold stares  
Of rich college yuppies and burnt out physics majors  
Who need a cannabis break to collect  
Their scattered, worn-hot pathways in their super-brains.  
And I'll continue to write about it all,  
    As if it concerns me,  
I don't write for them,  
    I am them  
    I write for myself  
    I steal their lives and movement  
    And trap them on the page  
The only escape is when the letters scramble off the page  
As the coffee bleeds the ink.



# BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

**Sarah Akemon** is an English major at IUPUC and intends to eventually become a teacher. She enjoys tea parties, frilly dresses, and pudding.

**Lisa Siefker Bailey** is a lecturer in the English Department at IUPUC. She received her Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University in 1996.

**Cole Billman** is a sophomore studying English literature and creative writing at IUPUC. He plans to make his career as a librarian and looks forward to pursuing future publishing opportunities.

**Tammy Sue Burton** is a junior majoring in Psychology with a minor in English at IUPUC. She is a lifelong poet and journalist. "I have a lot to say, I guess I never thought anyone had any interest in what it was." Tammy enjoys creative writing, painting, drawing, singing, dancing, laughing and the outdoors. Her friends and family are her inspiration for living in a positive manner. She aspires to work in the behavioral field and is working toward enhancing her creative writing skills to write children's books and short stories for publication. This is Tammy's first time sharing her stories and poems with the public.

**Fabiola Cabrera** was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, and moved to Columbus, Indiana, when she was years old. Growing up in an individualistic society mixed with a multicultural environment, Fabiola learned to communicate her political and social views in a creative way in writing fiction, poetry, and graphic novels. She is influenced by Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho, Japanese graphic artist Naoki Ursawa, and American literature. She wants to use her Latino roots, her experience as a volunteer and her charity as a human to reveal the reality of life, using her creative work as a tool. She is currently an English major with a minor in Psychology.

**Mike Fry** attended high school in the Dominican Republic, where he began writing. After returning to Indiana from the Caribbean, he enrolled in college briefly before a seven year journey through thirty-seven of the fifty U.S. states. He has returned to college with a new desire to share his stories with the world. His goal is to be a high school English teacher and his dream is to be a published author.

**Roseanne M Gordon** is a transfer student and is majoring in history, with a concentration in colonial American history. She plans to get her B.A. from Indiana University and finish her graduate schooling at The College of William and Mary, in Williamsburg, Virginia. She is an 18th century and early 19th century reenactor and she owns a small business making historically accurate clothing for fellow 18th century reenactors. Rosanne has been writing poetry for the last few years and began writing her first screenplay during her freshman year of college.

**Oshu Huddleston** is an IUPUC English major seeking a degree with a focus on creative writing. He has an interest in the education of English and writing in all levels of schooling, and has hopes of working in the entertainment industry in some writing capacity. He also plans to one day publish a collection of his short stories and has hopes of becoming a successful novelist.

**Joe Land** is a writer living in Indiana who hopes to graduate from IUPUC in May 2010. It has been, and you could ask the innocent bystanders, a strange and capricious journey for the young poet, lyricist, part time novelist and amateur wanderer. Joe finds comfort in exchanging meaningful thoughts and books with anyone who's a friend. All of his work this time around, even the gritty stuff, is dedicated to his father.

**Beth McQueen** is an English/Creative Writing major at IUPUC. Her interests include writing, reading, nature, the outdoors, traveling, shopping, camping, and playing with her niece. Her plans for the future include sending out more of her poems to magazines for possible publication.

**Peter Oren** is a senior at Columbus North High School who plans to attend Indiana University in Bloomington in the fall of 2010. He is considering studying Education, English, and/or Sociology. He is interested in conservation and innovation in education.

**Robert Stilwell** is IUPUC's resident poet. He received his Ph.D. from Ohio State University. He has taught literature and writing at IUPUC since 1985.

**Sherry Traylor** Sherry G. Traylor has been producing poems and stories for twenty years while working as a Licensed Practical Nurse in Columbus, Indiana. Her first published poems, "Mothers Hands" and "Grandma Rose," appeared in The Republic Newspaper (1992), and in the Hope Star Journal (1993). Marion College Registered Nurses heard Sherry's poem, "I Chose to Serve," at their graduation ceremonies from 1999-2004. In 2006, Publish America released her first novel, The Platonic Wife, available on Amazon.com. She contributed poems and essays to the 2005 and 2008-09 editions of Talking Leaves. She intends to complete her bachelor's degree in English Literature in 2011 and to continue her education in order to share her love of writing through teaching.







*Fall 2009—Spring 2010*