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Gina Marie LoBianco

Glen Davis

Jacob Foster

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Gina Marie LoBianco, Glen Davis, Jacob Foster, Rebecca Griffith, Jacob Dawson, Amanda Veale, Anthony Hesseldenz, Anna-Elise Price, Sarah Ruholl, Stephanie Drozd, Carissa Hayden, Andrew Decker, Shannara Holder, Mario Podeschi, Scott E. Lutz, and Jennifer O'Neil

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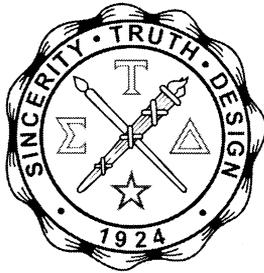
THE VEHICLE

Spring 2008



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Fall 2007 - Spring 2008 Vehicle
Prose, Poetry & Art Awards:

Best Overall:

Jacob Dawson, "Death Came Knocking" from Fall 2007

Poetry:

1st: Jacob Dawson, "Hey Mama" from Spring 2008

2nd: Amanda Veale, "Young Woman Older" from Spring 2008

3rd: Jacob Foster, "Gathering Rosebuds" from Spring 2008

Prose:

1st: Mario Podeschi, "Taboo" from Spring 2008

2nd: Glen Davis, "Lessons" from Spring 2008

Honorable Mention:

Nichole D'Antonio, "Is This Thing On?" from Fall 2007

Art:

1st: Megan Mathy, "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" from Fall 2007

Not So Hot Cocoa
(To a fish named Mooshu)
-Gina Lobianco-

The Semi-Truck whales and the Plankton Pickups
Down the Avenues of self medication sinking like lost boots in lagoons
Outside of the half cracked window, the canes, the panes, the desk
The fishbowl kingdom preoccupied peacock gills and filth from my neglect
Brooding in the center of the universe, we can assume Illinois
or some armpit of Mid West
Mud puddles and paper backed avalanches and dust coated sugar spills
The glass mug wearing a silver spoon at its side you know all too well
With hound dog eyes the steam rising from the top and your fins paddling
Canoe! Canoe!
Sometimes the King of the fishbowl does nothing but brood
But he would not leave his position for all of the tea in China
(He knows there are no t's in China)
But still he kinda rolls his eyes when I say "I'll be back for you"
And the mug is left steaming like an engine stalled on the tracks
And is amused at the thought of me walking in circles the same way that the
toilet flushes or staring out the window
He understands my bowl's no better
I'm sorry I'm about as dependable as the weather
And maybe that moon that was just so high
Is now the loneliest place on earth as it sinks into my mug like a tug boat
broken just
going down snoring
&
The groundhog was pretty hung over this morning.

Lessons -Glen Davis-

The cigarettes flipped and tumbled in the air as they made their leisurely arc over the table and into the grass. I watched this happen every day, the careful rolling of a single pinch of tobacco. I watched him delicately tuck one end to keep the tobacco from falling out and into his mouth. I knew about cancer even then, but as soon as I could, I was going to roll and smoke tobacco just like my grandfather. I wanted to inhale the smoke that had been killing my family for generations.

To be fair, my great-grandfather wasn't aware that smoking would kill him. Even my grandfather wouldn't find that out until after he had smoked for most of his life. He started when he was ten. I was eleven when I realized that I too would become a smoker. I wouldn't actually start smoking until I was thirteen, but everyone knew I was going to do it. I'd been getting the lectures about not smoking since I was eight, always from someone holding a cigarette. My own grandfather gave me the lecture once while lighting one of his hand-rolled cigarettes.

"Never start smoking, it's a terrible habit. I wish I'd never started." There was a quick flash from the lighter and the lecture was over.

He quit for almost two years at the end. He died from cancer before he could make the two year anniversary. My uncle quit after they removed part of his lung. He was already terminal by then, and even he said there wasn't much point in it. There was a book of matches in his hand when he died and a small pile of cigarette ashes on the picnic table in front of him

I watched both my uncle and my grandfather get sick, all the while rolling and lighting my own cigarettes. My father has emphysema now; they check his lungs every year for spots. He quit smoking early, early for my family.

He was forty five. He claims that he's never felt better, and that quitting was the best thing he ever did. He says this as he hungrily watches my cigarettes flip through the air and land gently on the grass.

I tell my own son to never start smoking. He's three now, at least ten years too young to start, but I tell him every day. I tell him how his great-grandfather died from cancer before he even got to meet him.

I try not to smoke around him. I close the garage door, and hide it from him like an addict. He doesn't understand the lectures, but I keep telling him anyway. I tell him about his grandfather and about his great-grandfather. I tell him about his great-grandfather's hands. How well they could hold a chisel and a plane, and I show him the tool box that those hands made. I point out the perfectly formed dove tail joints, and the perfectly smooth planed surfaces. I make him feel the joints and I let him play with the dangerously sharp chisels and spoke shaves that live in that box. Most of all, I tell him about how I wished my grandfather would have showed me how to use those tools. I tell him about how much there was to learn from that one grumpy old man. I tell him how all I ever learned from my grandfather was to manufacture cigarettes and flip them into the air when their usefulness was expended.

There just wasn't time for anything else.

Christian Campus House

-Jacob Foster-

I've been feeling
a bit vampiric on Sundays—
resting in your rows,
drinking in your certainty.

*All powerful, untamable
Awestruck we fall to our knees
As we humbly proclaim
You are amazing, God!*

The band up front always snaps me out of it,
leaves me feeling a bit smug, superior.
Advanced, even.

The boys all on the left swinging
and twanging their tuned phalluses
while the females sit/stand
sequestered stage right—
playing the keyboard and singing the harmony.

*He is our Rock (2x)
(repeat)*

Even still. There's a boy
sits across the aisle—
black coat, white shoes, black hat—
arms stretched full length to either side,
his eyes closed and his muscles
clenched and his head moving side
to side in time with the downbeat,
and there's an energy in the sound
I can't hear coming out of his mouth and
a frenzied peace on his face
that's frightening and enticing and
making me wonder if never
needing their Rock at all
was perhaps the worst thing
that could've happened to me.

Gray Area
-Rebecca Griffith-

Help me find the bottom of the night,
A gray streak along the rose line of dawn,
An orange spark against a black sky,
Like cigarette ashes being tapped by a hand
ready to give up.

In the bottom of the night, lullabies have been
hushed,
Whispers slice,
And words are unkind,
Stumbling disruptions.
It's only an hour
In which I can take up my pen
And let it speak for itself.

Only images find a place,
Not whole ideas,
Burning like smoking flowers in the back of
our minds,
In the bottom of the night,
The place my hesitant voice can find strength
in being the solitary sound.

Gathering Rosebuds

-Jacob Foster-

Come out to the park
on a Thursday at midnight;
come out, come out, we're here already
and some of us are stoned, some
drunk, some sober and
no one knows the difference
when the sun's gone down,
the moon's turned shy for the week
and you know—oh, oh you know—
you'll never finish that paper anyways.
Come watch big Jake
swing too high,
rattle the chains and shake the crossbar
while the rest of us are putting our feet
into the circle of solemn judgment,
deciding who will seek and who will hide.

*Bubblegum bubblegum
in a dish,
how many pieces
do you wish?*

Chad's it, and his skinny goatee
bristles while he counts and
the rest of us scatter into the darkness
and up into the tree, it's too high! okay,
behind the bushes, no they itch
ah fuck it, so dark tonight,
lie down in the middle of the field,
they'll never find you here.
Breathe slowly, they'll never
find you here.

A quick nap, they found you
passed out face down on the grass and
now we've all gotten tired of hide
and seek, made our way
to the bleachers by the soccer field,
sprawled across them
like so many hoodied delinquents.
Adria and Levi lead a sing-along
past the shared pieces
of our rainy-day childhoods,

*following the leader
through red letter moments
in whole new worlds, poxes placed
on phony English kings, shalala
miss-the-girl too shy boys and can
you feel the love tonight?*

Sexual tension in a cigarette,
passed around the group, through fingers,
lips, burnt slowly down the throat
to the lungs, slowly down
to the filtered nub and
Nancy says to light another
only there aren't anymore,
so we lie there, backs against
the warmed aluminum, looking
up into the silence that's
encircled us all, locked
us here in this space where
not one of us cares
that all the shooting stars we see
are probably just satellites,
burning.

Play Those Blues

-Jacob Dawson-

Smooth ebony hands
On white ivory keys
Dance around those sweet melodies
The rough chords
Chipped off his shoulder

The sadness drips from his brow
His heart on his sleeve
She left this time
For good

No money for rent
No food
No place to go
Play those blues man
Play those blues

The club He escapes
To each night
His real love
Waits
Covered

Dark
Black
Baby Grand
Smooth Love
A little money
In his pocket

Memories
Of a better Life
Dance in thoughts
Like music on
The page,
Play those blues man
Play those blues

He used to be a good
Man
Different
Place different
Time

Before his friends
The paper bag
Jack
Mary Jane
A good man He once was

When smooth ebony hands
On white ivory keys
Danced around those sweet melodies
The rough chords
Chipped off his shoulder

Play those blues man
Play those blues.

The Apple Car
-Amanda Veale-

There are seventy-six apples
in the rusty red oven
that rests with a sigh
on four half-lost wheels.
This is grandmother's apple car.

Grandmother loves dried apples.
Dried apples in pies
with decadent lattice crusts;
dried apples
in delicate pink porcelain dishes
just to taunt the nose, never to taste;
dried apples in the sweaty hands
of every visitor she takes in,
especially the men,
who she serves even from the porcelain bowls.
Grandmother loves dried apples.

It is my chore each day
to turn the apples in her apple car.

Mornings,
I wade through the weeds
to the barnyard grave of
her broken-down baby.
Everybody knows that weeds are wild,
and that bees crave apples
and cling in children's clothes,
so this is a job I do fast and naked—
running—

only a pair of boots on my feet
and one stone rolled up in the top of my left sock.

I breathe in just a gulp of the sour
before I get in the car,
and sit with the syrup
easing down my throat
while I work.

Bees in hoards of hundreds
feel out my skin with their feet
and buzz about the car,
warning me of the war in sight
should I try to swipe
one of their sun-dried glories.
But grandmother loves dried apples as well,
and I am a warrior queen.

So seventy-six apples in the apple car
I turn, every day,
each one a fistful of wrinkles,
damp and disgusting as grandmother's gob.
And when I'm back to the house at last,
clothed again, escaped from peril,
I'll get what my work has earned me:
a kiss on the cheek from grandma,
and a dear handful of dried apples
for breakfast.

A Night at the Uptowner
-Jacob Foster-

From cookies to suicide
in a matter of two minutes,
this conversation has quickly
spun out of control. Across
the table, Ashley's getting excited,
her voice going faster louder and a little
squeaky too, her eyes getting
all big and scary while her hands move
up and down, helping her say things.
She's been watching the Discovery
channel again.

They found this place, a hole
deep down in the ocean
where the water inside is heavier
than the water outside. It's coated,
this weighted salty lair, coated
along the edges with a simulated sandy
shore of molluscs, and the heavy water
runs up against their shells, laps them
with little heavy water waves.

We've decided
that this is where God lives
in the hole in the bottom of the sea.
And Jesus too,
Jesus, who is a fish

*Jesusfish,
extant in only the densest of environments, Jesusfish
prey is thick of carapace. Jesusfish, a lone membranous
blob, lies flat along his hole. Single appendage
of the Jesusfish is extended above, expanding at its edge into a glowing,
three-pronged spike that bobs
back and forth on the current.*

*You know what happens next.
Unsuspecting, the Jesusfish prey drops mouth open
onto the foremost spike of the Jesusfish lure, and
a mishmash of endorphins and toxins spurts into the bloodstream,
calms and kills the victim while the two outer prongs of the Jesusfish
spike curl inward, inject the carapace with acidic juices to begin
the digestive process. Jesusfish' membrane hardens into
two circular halves, encircles the prey and
snaps shut.*

So then God is an octopus with eyeballs
instead of suckers on its innumerable tentacles
that bore metaphysic tunnels in space,
shoot up out of the water and around
the world to hover unseen over your head,
watching you, me, the three of us here—
Ashley, Jacob, Thomas. Silly
college students who took their homework
to the bar only to concoct a new
Jules Verne novel, in which
our intrepid band of troubled agnostics,
borne beneath in their high tech submersibles,
dares to seek the eyes of God,
brave the light of the Jesusfish.

We do not speak of the chrome
curlicue shellacked
to the back of your Taurus,
I think Jesusfish loves you and
we are not drunk.

Candy Dish
-Anthony Hesseldenz-

A brightly painted medley.
Mix them up, but they
don't actually blend. They
remain themselves, identified by
color. And when we
see them,
we select
this one and
that one. Making our
choice based on a
system. How much
better would it be if we
just grabbed a
handful of M&Ms

Winter Day
-Anna-Elise Price-

the lake lies frozen in silence
a pale reflection of an unresponsive sky
dry leaves skitter
skimming a surface
scoured by scraps
worn down by wind
into grains of ice crystal sand

the field lies fallow
earth once brown
now fawn grey
black birds rise wheeling
omens on dark wings
speaking of Ceres
in winter depleted
spent beyond sorry
by a mother's deep grief

the tree stands alone
in naked defiance
a skeleton stripped black
exposed by the hills
stretched out before the sinking sun
until darkness falling
shrouds all

The Friendly Fog
-Sarah Ruholl-

In

Out

In

Out

In

Out

In

Out

The cage in which I live, grows,
My ivory walls expand, I can breathe

Twenty years spent floating,
I finally connect, I can smile,

My purple, my green, my grey, my red, my black,
My puzzle pieces align, I can relax,

Saddle bags, pulled tight,
Lenses narrow and wrinkled,
I have never been so perfect,

Euphoria

Ha

Ha

Ha

Concepts

These ties are binding and light,
This friend is interesting and lovely,

This fog is enveloping and friendly,
These concepts are universal and specific,

We are coming out of the friendly fog,
Broken and beaten within our walls,
Only to have been reconstructed,

We are

Growing

Changing

Evolving

Bonding

Hey Mama
-Jacob Dawson-

Hey Mama—
Look at me now,
Just a little bit,
Different than before

*You ain't no different,
You still a boy,
With no direction and no know how*

Hey Mama—
Look at me now,
I got my own job
Fifty bucks in my pocket

*You may got a job
Playin that ol' guitar on Fifth
Avenue
Fifty bucks ain't nothin
You still a boy,
With no direction and no know how*

Hey Mama—
Look at me now,
I got some dreams
Me, my blues, Fifth Avenue,

*You may got dreams
Those silly little songs?
Do they hand out checks?
You best pull your head out the clouds!
You still a boy,
With no direction and no know how*

Hey Mama—
Look at me now,
I found a sweet lil' gal,
And she loves me back

*Does She Love you like I do?
Will She be there when things fall apart?
Boy—Love ain't nothing but a dream,
You still a boy,
With no direction and no know how*

Hey Mama—
Look at me now,
I'm happy
On my own now

*You may be happy
Got some money
Some dreams
She might Love you
But I'm still here
You still a boy—my boy
With no direction and no know how*

Don't cry Mama!

Keep Turning
-Stephanie Drozd-

An old man expires,
A child loses to disease
Healthy middle-aged man, gone.
Death came knocking,
But the world kept on turning
As if nothing happened.

Seas crash, earth shakes
Skies rain, wind blows;
Another five thousand down,
And the world continues to turn
As if nothing happened.

A woman cries out for her child
A man mourns his wife
This world is so unfair
To those we love
Loved or not, everything stays in motion
As if nothing is happening.

Men, women, children,
Getting shot and blown up
War time is a nasty time
The fickle differences
Of the righteous, or non-believers
Whichever side- right, wrong, neutral, protester
The world keeps turning,
As if nothing happens.

Nobody notices the beggar,
Sitting in a dark corner
Trying to collect spare change.
He dies, lonely, peacefully,
And the world goes on
As if nothing happened.

A Pen, A Rose, and a Bottle of Jack
-Carissa Hayden-

Standing on the marble slab
Somehow seems irreverent.
But I'm closer than I've ever been,
Closer than I'll ever be.

At a cemetery in Oxford, Mississippi
Buried among the common folk.
A Pen, A Rose, and A Bottle of Jack
Couldn't be more appropriate.

Ten Days Later
-Andrew Decker-

Open casket?
I can't believe this.
I wouldn't think there would be much left.
He burned to death when his tanker exploded.

There isn't.

I almost can't bear to look.
They put a dummy in there!
My grandpa guides me away.
I can't stop gagging.

When it's all over
I reflect on our last conversation.

Hey Coz, I can't believe you told them you had asthma.
Why not? It's true.
Don't you want to serve your country?
I'm proud of our soldiers. But it's not for me.
Don't you want to wear that awesome uniform?
That better not be the only reason you joined.
Don't you want to be a hero?
Not when it involves getting shot at.

He lasted ten days.

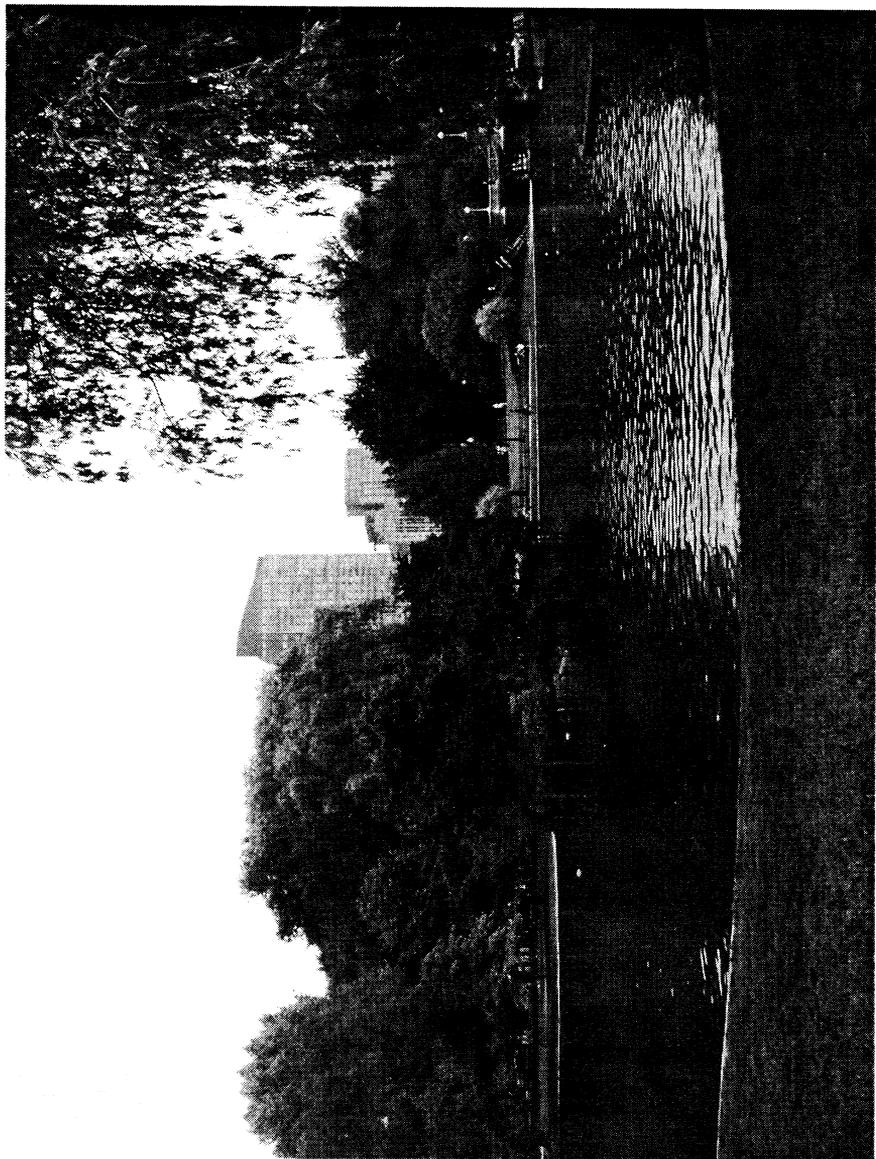
Down the Tracks
-Shannara Holder-



Out the Back Door
-Shannara Holder-



Untitled
-Jennifer O'Neil-



Lullaby
-Shannara Holder-



Fear

-Shannara Holder-

I want to pull out my hair,
scratch out my eyes,
make my skin bleed,
but I don't,
for fear that my nails will crack.
And what would I do without them?

I want to pound in my head,
beat my body to bruises,
hit my face past pain,
but I don't,
for fear that my hands would snap.
And what would I do without them?

I want to place my arms around you,
place my lips upon you,
give myself to you,
but I don't,
for fear that I would break.
And what would I do without me?

Thank You and Goodnight

-Jacob Foster-

It's twenty 'til at the local
Latino club, and the dancers have begun
to stream past my booth on their way out.
The white man selling bouquets of flowers
nods in passing on his way to the bar
as I watch you watch me over the
shoulder of your partner.

Mmmba, mmmba

Mmmba, mmmba

there are only four beats to this song
only four ways to move
left left, right right
back back, front front then d

i

p

your fingers hanging over his shoulder
make whorls in the smoke of the room.
Swallowing the last dregs of restraint
from the bottom of a margarita glass,
I stand and make my way to your corner
of the emptying dance floor, and place
my hand on a shoulder that, moments
before, had been so very obliging:

Excúseme, puede yo cortan adentro

Mmmba, mmmba

Mmmba, mmmba

there are only four beats to this song
only four ways to move
and I've never seen anything like
the way your teeth pinch into your
bottom lip.

My hands move to your hips,
warmed by the heat of your
nightlong dance, and pull you
closer; your black curls, damp
with sweat, cling in spots
to the deep brown of your face,

Mmmba, mmmba

Mmmba, mmmba

there are only four beats to this song
and sometimes the dancers spin.

Your smell is a mixture of cinnamon and
nicotine, and I lean forward to breathe you
deeply and ask your name, but you reach
over my shoulder to grab a lit cigarette
from your first partner who is silent as he nods.
You blow the smoke from your first drag
into the air above us and smile,

then we are moving, stepping in
time to the four beat bachata rhythms

Mmmba, mmmba

Mmmba, mmmba

Left left, right right

Back back, front front then we d

i

p

through the motions until
you lead and we spin, the pattern
is more intricate, moves us,
hip against hip, across the floor and
into the center where the music stops
mid-dip and the sweat from my chin
drips to mingle with the beads lining
your cleavage only to disappear when
I lift you. You raise one finger to trace
the outline of my chin before pulling my
face down to share the ash in your mouth.

Your smile, when you turn to leave, is the same
as when we began,
and the roses I bought you are left on the table.

My Mother's Passing
-Amanda Veale-

The room groaned at me
when I found my mother there.
Her flowers curled and wept,
petals lost, lying about the carpet
all stiff and grey—so many tiny bones.
The books were complaining of the dust—
asking to be held.
And the television—what a bitter cry—
signaling for help,
a deafening static rasp.

It was all too much for me.
I wilted to the floor and smushed
my earlobes under my hands.

What was my childhood,
cradled there in her breasts,
rotting away now,
just useless bark
shedding from a tree,
terminally ill?
And what of those other years,
still flowing, as all my years do,
through the tributaries of her wrinkles,
and collecting at last
in the steady lines of her palms?
Even those lines were vanishing now.

Puddles settled home at my knees.
She would have to be cremated.

Sometime later,
I found myself telling others,
one tear strategically glossing my cheekbone,
of the way I steadied her passing with my lullabies,
of how she winked at me
before she finally died.
Later I stuffed her mystery
deep into some endless pocket,
buried it under lint and dust,
and stashed it in the furthest corner
of my coldest closet.

The Bearded Man

-Andrew Decker-

The bearded man didn't always have a beard.
He grew tired of his old life, tragedy,
and moved to a new town to grow his beard.
He made many new friends who called him by his new
beard name. Two years passed with the beard.

The bearded man forgot his old face, the one without
the beard, and one day he shaved it off.
Most bearded men forget about a weak chin,
hockey scar, or acne pocks.
The bearded man forgot about
the carnival scene inside.

His skin was not like normal skin:
it was a transparent sort forming two globes over
his cheeks. Inside a tiny circus of cogs and
wheels turned on cranks powered by dingy brown
clowns with cigars half lit. Teeth could be seen
through his cheeks and on each was a little door
and sign that read *Mirror Maze, House of horrors,*
Freaks Freaks Freaks, and the like.

A river of tiny teeth people wandered in and out.
A strongman hoisted anvils above his head
And the bearded man remembered why he grew his beard.

He turned his other cheek.

Elephants trunk in tail walked slowly by and a Ferris Wheel
spun with full lights blazing. The bearded man
had a hard time seeing the festival and reached for
the magnifying mirror. Just then he saw a mustached
man jump in the basket of a hot air balloon and take off.
I wonder how high he can go in there the bearded man
thought, and he opened his mouth wide and out came
the mustachioed man in the hot air balloon the size of a
marble.

The bearded man marveled at the balloon slowly rising
in front of him and thought, *That is the bravest man
I have ever seen.*

And then the once bearded man brushed his teeth.

Taboo

-Mario Podeschi-

August didn't think he'd be able to sleep, but the sunlight hovering underneath the curtains said otherwise. His head ached somewhat from the night before, but he knew he hadn't gotten that drunk. He wished he had.

Caprice Costello was still sleeping. Her hair--freshly-dyed black--obscured most of her eyes, and she had the covers pulled so tight that a casual observer wouldn't be able to tell she was naked. A bit of drool leaked onto her pillow, a detail that August found surprisingly endearing, given that she had teased him about that very thing since they were children.

He spent two full minutes getting out of bed. He slid first one foot and then another to the side of the bed, and folded the covers off himself a half inch at a time. He used both arms to support him as he stood, walking gingerly off the bed and toward the restroom.

He overlooked the used condoms on the nightstand. He wasn't ready.

By the time he reached the toilet, he was angry with his willpower and with his body. He yanked himself out of his boxers, and it hurt, like he was trying to pull his guilt straight off of his pelvis. This wasn't how it was supposed to be. Caprice wouldn't have been able to make the party if he had not picked her up from Western. They hadn't seen each other in months. They had called it a great chance to catch up on old times.

He did not wash his hands. The mirror frightened him. Instead, he went to the little table which, as in all motel rooms, was next to the window. His backpack sat on the ground nearby, and his sketchbook still sat open on the table.

Sketching sounded like a good idea. He flipped open to a blank page and made a diagonal line. He had meant it to be a nose, but now that it was on the page, he could not see how it could ever hope to be a nose. He tried to imagine a face belonging to it, and for a moment he thought it could be his nose. Perhaps it could even be Caprice's. She had the same sculpted Roman nose that he did,

though a little sharper.

August flipped to another blank page. A horizontal line this time, with a little bump halfway through it to signify the bottom of an upper lip. This, at least, came out well, and he occupied himself for five minutes shading a pair of lips to go with the line. When he held the sketch at arms length, he noticed that he had created a remarkable mouth: close-lipped, vaguely upturned, like they were trying not to crack a smile. He smiled back.

The nose came next. A lighter line this time, less bold, more flexible. His mind drifted to the guidelines he never wanted to use, the faint lines that professional artists were supposed to use to get their proportions right. He hadn't fully dismissed them yet, but he kept finding that his better work came from a much freer approach. Then again, an unpleasant number of pages in his sketchbook contained only a single feature--an eye here, a finger there, a dog's nose elsewhere. Like a flipbook Picasso.

Caprice stirred on the bed, jolting him from his musings. When he looked over, he saw that she had rolled over, putting an arm around his former pillow. Her bare back peeked out from under the covers, and he could make out a small hint of green from her New Age rose tattoo. It was the colors that made it New Age: unlike Old School's bold lines and muted colors, New Age was an explosion of blended, bright colors, more like an oil painting than a stencil. He had advised her to go Old School, but looking at the bright green leaves of the rose crawling up her back, he had to admit that she was right to choose otherwise.

When August looked back at his sketch, he realized he had lost his grip on the face he had just pictured so vividly. He brought his pencil to the nose again, but could not add another line. Spinning it to a different grip, he placed the broad end of his graphite onto the page, but the angle still seemed off. Some artists, he knew, thrived off conflict. They could channel rage or love or guilt into their brushes, and their insanities translated to something beautiful. But all his rage and love and guilt could do was print dismembered body parts.

The troubled artist let his head fall onto his bicep. His head ached more than he would care to admit, enough to make him suspect that going back to sleep would be impossible. After all, Caprice Costello

was now covering most of the bed, and he could not tolerate the idea of disturbing her. Not that she had her mother's crankiness, not at all—but there was something fragile in her sleep, a mercy he could not deny her.

Food. Maybe food would help, he decided. His jeans still lay by the door next to his shoes, intermingled with Caprice's shirt and socks. Walking to the door, he squatted down and deliberately picked up her garments, setting them neatly just inside the tiny motel closet. Unsatisfied with this organization, he then picked up her shirt, folded it neatly, and put it back down.

Pulling on his jeans, he set about looking for his other clothing. His white t-shirt he spied on the dresser, still slightly damp. As he slipped his head through the neck, his eyes drifted under the bed, where one of his socks had settled. He hadn't been this sloppy since he was a kid.

Taking a breath to steady himself, he approached the bed. The room squeaked terribly on this section of floor, and he found himself carefully rolling from heel to toe on each foot in careful, five-second steps. He squatted down upon reaching the side of the bed, reaching for the sock, and then she stirred again.

It was a slight shuffle, just the legs, like she had taken a step somewhere in her dreams. As the covers moved, five toes peeked out from underneath. They flexed delicately, going in order from small to large, almost like they were waving. Her bright blue polish shimmered under the white covers. August's heart stopped.

August blushed in the quiet motel room, and for a moment he forgot to feel bad about himself. He was tempted to think more, to justify himself, to perhaps find a way to accept his lust. But where was the other sock? He looked on the table, the nightstand, the dresser, the floor, even the windowsill, but no sock. With veiled panic he looked at the covers. There. Surely. Lost in the tangle, buried in last night along with his most natural inhibitions. Perhaps if he was especially careful, he might be able to retrieve it without waking her.

The risk was too great, he decided. He would walk to the vending machine with one sock.

The ground was wet from a recent rain, but the Florida sun was shining brightly. This was the way with Florida, he had learned--it would rain three times daily, but the sun was out and the sky was perfect for at least twenty hours between dawns.

He spied a couple of boys rollerblading past the snack machine. They were clearly brothers, with identical curly brown hair and similar builds. They must have been about fourteen, both just beginning to explore puberty. They did not notice him.

August had plenty of change in his pocket. He and Caprice had struck a deal before their road trip that he would cover the food and drinks while she would handle the gas. Because of this, he had the leftovers from a half dozen 3.99 breakfasts and dollar-menu lunches. Though he felt guilty from the junk food, it seemed like a satisfying prospect this particular morning, and he counted out sixty cents in nickels and dimes to purchase an oversized sugar cookie.

On his way back to the room, his eyes drifted casually over the room number: 13, 14, 15, 16. He didn't actually read the numbers, but they still appeared somewhere in his brain, the same spot reserved for boring art theory textbooks read past midnight. He stopped at number 17.

The key.

The motel used a magnetic lock, printed on something like a credit card. He had completely forgotten to look for it, and now he felt like a pig wallowing in the filth of his own ignorance. How had he made such a massive oversight? The key. Of course the key. He had walked out of a door without thinking about the key. Idiot.

He glanced at the motel office and wondered which option was worse: knocking and waking Caprice, or asking the manager to let him in. Talking to the manager was like talking to anyone for August--uncomfortable, painfully polite, anxious. But waking Caprice meant, well, waking Caprice. And waking meant her being awake. And her being awake meant a far more uncomfortable conversation than anything the manager could possibly give to him.

Rather than deciding, August opened his cookie. He opened it as he opened every cookie wrapper--pinch the sides, pull slowly, and

watch with satisfaction as the top crease split apart. People tended to be so cavalier with their wrapper these days, ripping them with fingers and teeth, like savage hyenas trying to get at a dead gazelle. His way was better. His way risked no damage to the cookie, and kept the crumbs in the refuse where they belonged. Such a simple task. Idiots.

The cookie, despite his precise techniques, was stale. He ate it anyway, and it landed heavily in his stomach, detonating some sort of intestinal landmine that instantly made him want to retch. He didn't.

August regained his composure and found a miracle just to the right of the doorknob. The entrance was slightly ajar, a physical sliver of hope between the jamb and the door itself. Holding his breath, he pushed it carefully, grinning with satisfaction as it slid open.

And there she was, crying.

Struck mute by the surprise, he shoved the door shut behind him, flinching a little as it slammed. He stood dumbly for a few seconds, the barely-contained self-loathing of the morning slamming into him like a box of bricks.

"It broke," she said.

It broke? What broke? What it? What--

"The condom?" he asked, his voice cracking under the cookie's dryness.

"Yeah," she choked, "the condom."

"Have you ever, I mean--can't we just?"

"I'll have to get a morning after pill."

"Yeah," he said, still unmoving. She was staring at him now. His eyes kept shifting to unlikely places as she stared--first her bare chest, then his sketchbook, then the TV, then the closet. This wasn't right. This was too cruel. "Should... I drive?"

"Could you?"

"Yeah." He looked at the dresser, where the room phone sat on a local phone book. What to check? The yellow pages? He would figure it out. He was glad for the task, in fact. Anything but trying to make sense of--

"Sorry I was crying."

"S'ok."

"I just noticed it before you came back in."

"S'ok."

"Look at me."

And he did. He wasn't sure what exactly she meant, but he followed the command instinctively.

"What we did was wrong, wasn't it?"

August said nothing.

"Well, wrong in the Christian sense at least. Or the Muslim. Or the Darwinian." Somehow, she smiled.

"Guess we, um, weren't, uh, careful. Enough. Careful enough."

Caprice looked away then, at last, and August felt far more comfortable looking at her naked form. She was more focused in her look than he had been earlier, selecting the top of the curtains to stare at.

August found his voice. "I'm sorry," he said with as much conviction as he could muster. When she didn't accept his apology or offer one of his own, he frantically tried to re-ravel the mess. "It won't ever happen again, I promise. We'll get you the pill, we'll meet with Aunt Carol this afternoon, and everything will be fine. Like it never happened."

She turned back to look at him. "No."

August looked away, feeling even sicker now. "But," was all he was able to mumble.

"I mean, we can't ignore something like this. Something this... big."

"But."

She listened for a moment to see if he would go on, then continued herself. "I never expected this. I'm going to have to—"

"Think about it?"

"Yeah."

Caprice looked down at the lips and half-drawn nose on the table. She whimsically picked it up and began flipping through the pages while the muddled young man went back to the phone book. Looking through the sketchbook remained an intense experience for Caprice, who felt like each floating eye and mouth and foot used to belong to her. As she reached the front, she stopped on a complete picture, a sketch of an old Basset hound sleeping.

While August scanned the yellow pages, Caprice ran a finger over the signature in the corner and mouthed what she saw there.

"August Costello."

Dervish
-Scott Lutz-

Kathy asks where she knows that word from. One of the words we are born with. See: Whirling Dervish. Any kid knows the phrase and can use it smartly. I knew the word the first time I swung a jump rope over my head. First time I spun so hard I fell down. First time I got in a fight. First time I saw the roller derby. One of the words a child invents. Re-invents. Adopts. Owns. But what does it mean to a child. Children don't have definitions, no, they have examples and pictures. Say —It means a Muslim who takes a vow of poverty, generally using dance in ritual. (pause) They respond —No, it's like this...(and spinning and jumping and gyrating and grunting).

Ick
-Jacob Foster-

In that one Whitman poem
about the Brooklyn Bridge, there's
a bit near the end, after he's hashed
the whole thing out and decided that he,
and it, and everything is OK,
he calls out to himself in a moment
of triumphant self-acceptance,

"Throb, baffled and curious brain!"

Right now, leaning out
over the pedestrian walkway
of the same bridge, book of poems
dangling from one hand, I'm watching
a middle-aged man in an Audi
cut off an H2 packed
to capacity with squawking teenage girls,

and thinking how well throbbing,
baffled brain describes this city.

Not so much curious. They walk
too fast to be curious; quick, short steps,
hunched shoulders, messenger bags
choking slightly on the neck. Everybody's

lips are sort of rolled, focused
up into an extra sphincter, that expression
they trained their three year college careers
to perfect, so that when the time to play
the office politico arrives, they needn't
dally, only rise to the occasion,
their destination.

But at least the pizza's good.
Ol' Walt never said anything about that;
nothing about these orange and white
cylinders either, sticking up
out of the ground, spitting a steady
stream of white smoke into the sky,
easing the pressure from beneath. Maybe
that's why they walk so fast. Maybe
they can feel it, the fire under their shoes,
the heaving of some subterranean beast
struggling to rise and consume
them all. Maybe that's why
their eyes are always on the ground,
as if they can keep it down there
with the weight of their gaze.

Maybe the giant brain
is under there, orchestrating
their movements with a billion
psychic messages, drawing their eyes
to the sidewalk for reasons
they don't understand. Maybe
this whole poem is my little brother
Second City angst getting
the better of me. I certainly
wouldn't rule it out.

Central Park brings a respite,
a slowing down. I'm walking
across Rumsey Playfield with my oldest
brother, standing on top of a conductor's
platform that, for some reason,
is still here in the winter, and conducting
something that's probably important
because we're here, and we're
important. We talk about walking

down to the bandshell,
getting up on stage and air guitaring
the shit out of the sixty five and over
audience that came to watch
three guys play some cellos. Rock 'em
just like a hurricane.

We find a football underneath some bushes
alongside the path, and after a brief
discussion concludes that it probably
doesn't have AIDS, we pick the ball
up and walk to the nearest overpass
we can find. He stays on one side
while I run to the other, and we joke
about whose arm will give out
first and now I can really breathe.

But even here, twenty minutes later,
seated on a park bench dedicated
to "our beloved Ice Cream (1979-1999)
who melted our hearts," I can feel
the pulsing beneath my feet,
feel the brain tissue push up
out of the ground, up through
the tiny holes in my shoes, and squish
in between my toes. I feel the urge
to take the machete I keep sheathed
in my sternum and hack my way
past the frontal and temporal lobes,
down to the stem and shred
that with my teeth. But I know,
now knee-deep in cerebra, having
touched the stuff with my hand, I know
that upon arriving at the stem,
I would find it severed already,
and that the thing—baffled, throbbing—
lives yet on.

Meditation of the Seasons
-Stephanie Drozd-

My toes are numb, my fingers too
The cold weather makes life dull
I wish I could make a fire
Warm, comforting, in the palm of my
hands.

Why doesn't the weather
Feel as beautiful as it looks
When it snows?

Blooming flowers and tree buds
Life starts anew
Goslings waddle back to the pond
Afraid to leave the safety of their mother's
wings

I have never seen
Cherry Blossoms in full bloom
I would enjoy to
Sit beneath their canopies
As warm spring air fulls my lungs

It's hot, very hot
Sweat rolls down my back
Feels nice in the breeze

The air-heavy and thick
The sun-scorching and bright
Fireflies accent the bright full moon
Dragonflies dance on the breeze
And a sudden summer shower
Turns the grass green as emeralds

Trees bend in the wind
Leaves fall to the ground
I step on it, crunch!

The sky glows orange
As the horizon meets sun
Yellow, red and brown
Leaves fall, a squirrel collects nuts
Flocks of geese fly south

Full Moon

-Anna-Elise Price-

In dreams I hunt with tooth and claw
rend tender flesh out of my prey
drink deep the sacred blood of life
rejoice anew in strength thus gained
run free to feel my own heart pound
in muscles moving under fur
embrace the rush of mountain air
and howling sing unto the moon.
Glorious goddess shining fair
over all and undemanding
allowing me to be what is
until I wake to reassume
my body, wracked, controlled by pain
no hunter, just the one consumed.

Becoming Wise
-Amanda Veale-

At five
a flash of hornets
stormed my backyard fortress,
and fell—a graceful arc—
upon the apple rigged as a trap
for the legendary
neighborhood circus bear.
I cowered and closed my eyes
and died
and awoke brave
and dried of the dirty drench
hard play had won me.

At six
birds began to drop
in great clans
stiff breasted from treetops.
I wept a tear over each
and planted them
with plywood placards
under the furthest pine tree
where I knew our lazy dog
would never pee.
Then my mother told me about maggots
and I fell ill
and died
in the hotness
of hard-edged delirium
and awoke
casting harassing looks
at graves everywhere.

At seven
the springtime was angry
and aloof
and filled with tumult.
When my brother
spotted a tornado
cresting our hill,
I quit hope in spring
and died.
I awoke in the sunshine
knowing about lies.

At eight
the night grew large
and witches crept
within its shadowy folds.
I fell one night to their nest
and died
silently
in their claws.

When I awoke the next morning,
whole-bodied and grinning,
I was immortal.

In Sight
-Anthony Hesseldenz-

exploring
the maze of the mind we
find a multitude of

hidden treasure and
gifts we've
never used
lie covered in cobwebs
gathering dust and
shadow-

filled boxes hold the
fears we hide from
ourselves in the abyss

lurks the unknown a
void in the
heart of our
being which we cover with
self-
delusion

About the Authors

Glen Davis, English major with minors in Biology and Creative Writing.

Jacob Dawson, English major. He graduates this year and will be proceeding on to graduate school in the fall. He hopes some day to be a full time writer.

Stephanie Drozd, Senior English and Theatre Arts major. She enjoys writing fiction.

Jacob Foster, English major. *"I would like to dedicate "Ick" to Dr. Sylvia because, really, it's his fault it ever got written."*

Rebecca Griffith, Junior English major. She is hoping to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing.

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About the Authors

Scott Lutz, English graduate student. He is writing a book of poems for his thesis. In addition to writing he likes to bake bread and ride his bike.

Jennifer O'Neil, Senior English major. She is graduating in May with plans of returning in Fall 2008 for Grad School at EIU. She dreams of becoming a writer and university professor. She hopes to visit Ireland in the next few years. She is a member of English Club and President of Writer's Ink.

Mario Podeschi, English graduate student. He teaches English 1001 and hopes to receive his M.A. this summer.

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“There are so many different kinds of writing and so many ways to work that the only rule is this: do what works. Almost everything has been tried and found to succeed for somebody. The methods, even the ideas of successful writers contradict each other in a most heartening way, and the only element I find common to all successful writers is persistence—an overwhelming determination to succeed.”

- Sophy Burnham

