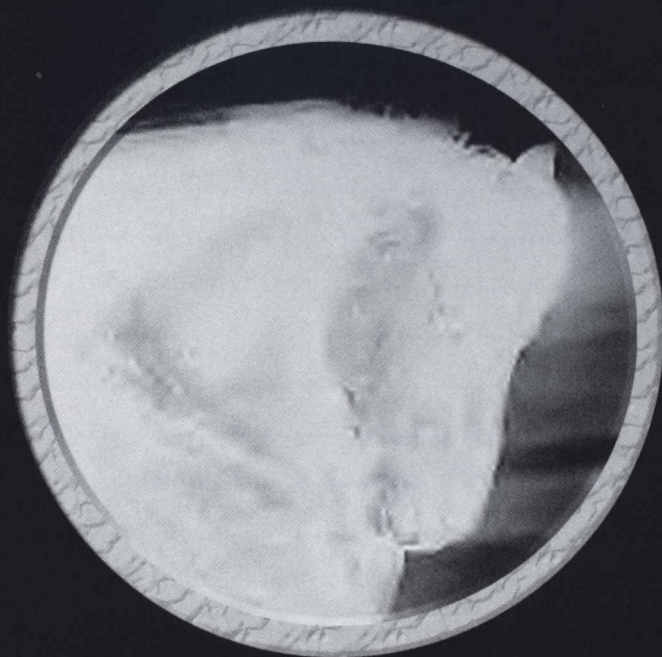


P E G A S U S





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Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek mythology, was born from the blood of Medusa's severed head after the hero Perseus slew her. Legend has it that it was Pegasus' stomping on Mt. Olympus that caused the springs of water to form that eventually birthed the Muses. Thus, Pegasus has gone down in history as a symbol of creative genius.

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Talisman

By Russell S. Onimus

Talisman, talisman, it is a lucky charm.
I carry them around with me to keep me safe from harm.
Talisman, talisman, it's usually a gift.
I share them with the ones I love so that we never drift.

It roots in superstition back unto the dawn of time.
Used in most religions they are thought to be divine.
One symbol is the wedding ring, of which it is a sign.
Its circle means forever, or until the end of time.
Some people never take them off, for fear it is a crime
against the one who put it there, whose love it may entwine.

Talisman, talisman, it may reduce your stress.
Because the one whose gift it was is wishing you the best.
Talisman, talisman, think of them what you may.
No matter what you think of them, they've been here and they'll stay.

TALISMAN! TALISMAN! HOPE YOU GET ONE TODAY!

Lovers Dance

By Samantha O'Grady

Sweethearts dance around the flame
faster to the beat
warmer in the heat
fabric flies
and time goes by
flesh and hearts revealed
Morning comes like rain
We wonder who or what's to blame
Prudence becomes our stance
now the lovers dance around the pain.

Heaven's Rain

By David LaBarca

I feel the puzzle in your eye, thinking of why
we waste away like the snow turning to rain.
And why are romantic scenes never complete,
without the vivid artist, painting our inward pain.

Could I help in these long dark hours?
Love you in a different land. Time stands still
for those of intellect and beauty and dishonesty and cruelty.
Together we'll fight with swords and flowers.
Against the days that don't end and never will.

Funny, us, running around in life's circle,
searching and scratching until we've found
the world is so small and hardly round;
yet we fit.
Swimming against the current
under a sky too dimly lit.

Suppose they're not right
and we're not wrong.
Others may argue ending the night,
and in spite this anger they write.
Revenge is an awful song.

I'd rather see you standing alone in the cold
than care about the man that leaves that stain
on society, in you; in my borrowed world
only your tears can make heaven into rain.

Stare

By Minjoo Kweon

I am a menagerie,
A circus,
The act you forget,
A face in the crowd.
The curtain closes,
The lights go out.
And into the darkness,
I Peer.

Dark eyes,
Deep and lightless,
Sightless in moonshine,
Stare.

Sanity, that Slippery Noodle

By Samantha O'Grady

Didn't want to go nuts over you
Didn't want to get emotional
I feel my sanity like a slippery noodle
And you: you are the colander.

Ubiquitous

By George Sworn

She will not encourage your ego,
Nor mention what you lack;
She will inspire your dreams,
Only to take them back;

She will offer you a world,
Full of marvels and promise;
She will reveal its nature,
Both deceitful and honest;

Her motive remains unknown;
Her beauty yet undefined;
She is the same to all things;
She is, as ever, called Time.

Have You Ever

By John Godson

Have you ever touched an angel?
Flirted with death
Stolen someone's last breath
Have you ever loved someone and a day later hated that same person?
Thought something was bad and then it worsens
Have you ever died and came back to life?
Carved all of your thoughts into your arm with a knife
Have you ever visited hell for fun?
Skipped on the moon and danced on the sun
Have you ever cried?
Have you ever lied?
Have you ever given everything you have and received nothing in return?
Watched human flesh burn
Have you ever woken up somewhere and had no clue how you got there?
Have you ever thought life was fair?
Had no cares
Have you ever had your heart broken?
Had people laugh at you while you were choking
Have you ever read the Bible?
Thought someone's words were actually reliable
Have you ever questioned what you were taught?
Committed a crime and was never caught
Have you ever traveled on a star to the end of the Universe?
Witnessed something as powerful as a gamma ray burst
Used salt water to quench your thirst
Finished first
Have you ever considered yourself peerless?
Fearless
Have you ever exited your body and looked down at your true self
Have you ever set impossible goals?
Will you ever reach Heaven with the rest of the naïve, righteous souls?

An Awakening

By Minjoo Kweon

Life is a continual awakening, an enlightenment of one's self to the next. Everyone has a host of facets within them, but only several that are fully active at a given time. One often leads double, triple, or more lives at once and forces them to be separate and hostile towards each other.

I am Korean-American, but, for most of my life, I have been American. This American side of me liked vast, open plains, hamburgers, and blue jeans. She spoke perfect English, the kind that my parents still think is too arrogant, and read sprawling English novels. In my dreams, she had light hair, skin, and deep emerald pools for eyes; however, my American me was never allowed to be visible at home; she was doomed to the outside.

My other Korean side stayed at home. She spoke broken, often humorously incorrect Korean, and ate rice. She watched Korean dramas and listened to Korean music. This me had dark hair, and flattened Asian features. At home, I was thought to be Korean with Korean values, interests, and ideas.

My halves were an extreme paradigm of a paradox. The one destined to be shown to the world was an image that never existed. The image of the other, stifled into quiet existence, was seen by all.

An awakening from my status quo came unexpectedly. My family and I were going to Korea, the country of my birth. The trip brought a host of new questions to my mind: Would I like it? Would I fit in? Would I want to stay there forever? My two sides debated on these questions. As my American side prepared to make the change to become the inner life, my Korean side stretched its wings in anticipation of happy revelries.

On arriving at Incheon Airport, dizzy by the lack of sleep, I felt a change, not just the jetlag and messy hair but a real change, a metamorphosis. An odd feeling crept through me and tried to pierce its way out. I wanted to shout "Ahn nyung ha sae yo!" at the top of my lungs. I saw Korea for the first time: the spotless airport, the green highway signs, and the tiny stores obnoxiously flashing their neon signs into the night. As my eyes drank in the sights, my Korean self slowly emerged from her cocoon.

The more I saw of Korea, the more I saw its unique beauty, and the more I saw of my Korean butterfly. In my memory there lurk scenes that still haunt me: the delicate mists that envelop the

emerald mountains and chill the beholder with a serene melancholy; the calm of the palaces that once housed all the beauty, tragedy, and mystique of the Imperial nation; the gray clouds that engulf the sea, making myths of the islands and the gulls, and blinding human eyes to all existence: and finally, the Han River, blazing fantastic reds in the sunset, searing my homeland into my soul and mind.

Before, I had seen everything, even myself, with American eyes. I had believed that the dream face with ravishing green eyes was the one everyone else saw. Mirrors gave me no comfort. They tormented me, for I could never see the face I wished to see.

Riding the subway one morning, I discovered I was not seen as American. I saw an American tourist in the subway and sought to find his eyes. I wanted him to see my American face. However, when our eyes met, I saw no look of camaraderie but one perhaps of despair that said, "Another Korean." Then I looked into the eyes of the lady sitting across from me, and I knew she also saw my Korean side. For the first time I discovered that the façade I wore did not hide my oval, yellow face.

This discovery was a complete shock. For years I had steadfastly wished to believe that I had an impeccable, lovely face, but, looking into the eyes of the people in the subway car, I knew I had been fooling myself with a fantasy. I knew that I was born Korean and would be Korean forevermore. With this understanding, I could hear the banshee cries of my halves fighting for dominance.

Nations wage wars of conquest and of liberation, and these do not end without much destruction. Such was the war over my nationality. My two lives were intertwined. In warring against one another, they wounded themselves as much as the other. I struggled with the thought of not having a nationality, but I could not sever both, for that would be suicidal. I could not part with one for the other since they would both die on separation. I had no choice but to reconcile. Only then was the term Korean-American finally clarified. I was both at once. I discovered that my halves had no reason to struggle against each other. Now my two sides are manifest simultaneously, as one.

For You, Grandmom

By Rita DiAntonio

How do I say "goodbye" to you?
I don't know how,
but I will try to think of some way.

You were such a great person.
I truly respected you,
not only because you were my grandmother,
but also, you were my very good friend.

It will just take some time to say "goodbye" to you.

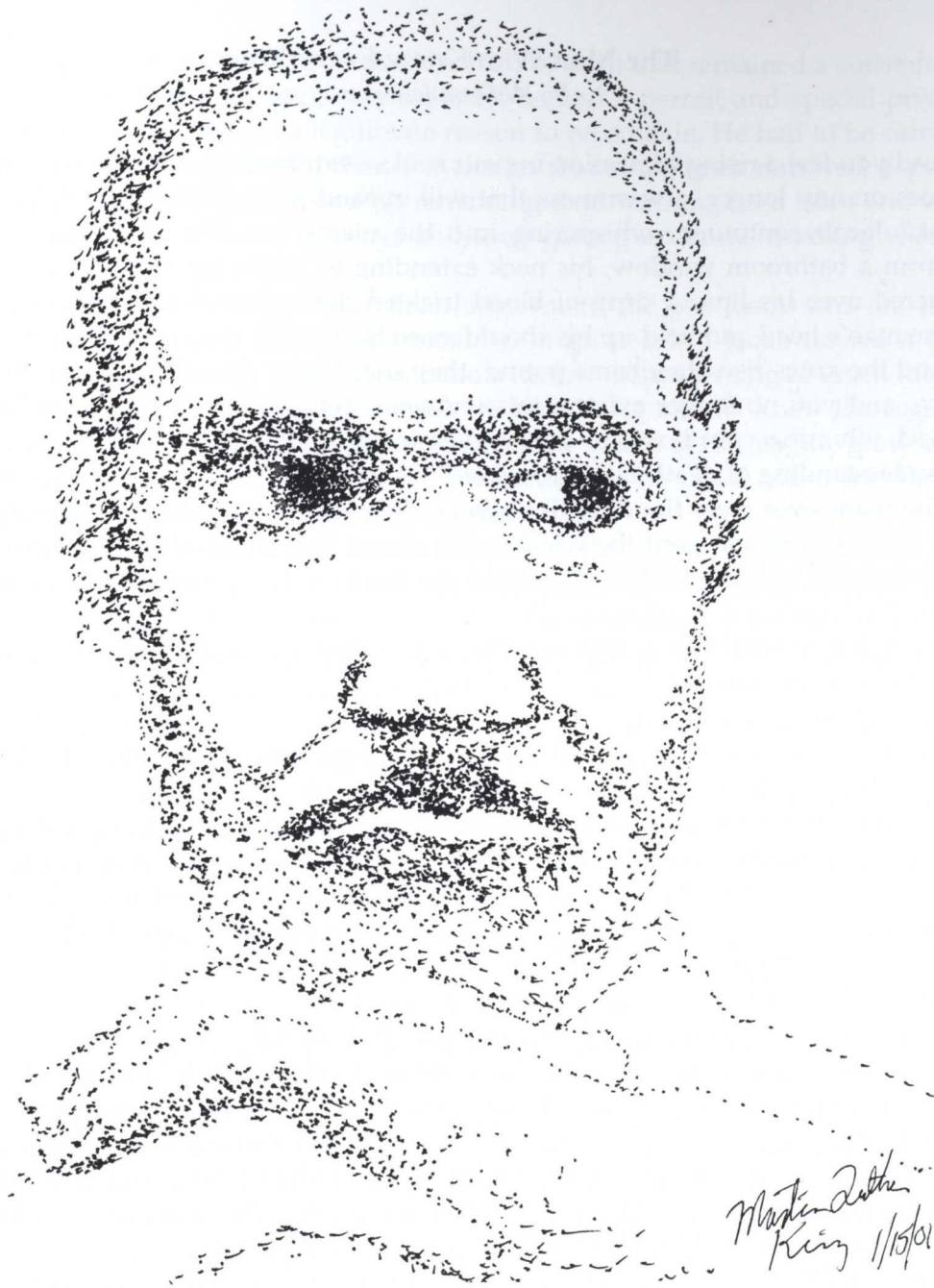
People used to tell me I looked like you,
but I never noticed it myself.
You loved the color blue
and I too love the color blue.

You always would make me laugh
when you called grandpop "a damn gypsy"
because he never stayed home.
You often said you were from the "old country"
but we all knew it was Russia.
I will never forget the story of how you and grandpop met.
It was always funny to hear grandpop say,
"I'd put her on the trolley to get rid of her,
but she always found her way back."

I will always remember the fun times we shared together.
Grandmom, I will miss you,
but I can't be sad and I am not going to say "goodbye" to you.
I believe we are just closing a chapter in a book that we shared together.

Grandmom, I love you,
and I will miss you so, so much.
I can't be sad, because I know
you're happy now once again to be with grandpop.
Still, I am going to miss you both so very much.
You were great people.

I was truly lucky to have you both as my grandparents,
and to have you as a part of my life growing up.



Martin Luther King

By John P. Havelin

The Man Who Knew Everything

By William Johnson

"And you feel a rising of passion in your soul so exhilarating that you fear you will soon die if it goes on any longer, a warmth that will expand from within until it bursts through your chest," Jacob continued, whispering into the man's ear. The man's upper body was hanging from a bathroom window, his neck extending to Jacob, his eyes full of tears and his teeth zippered over his lips. A drop of blood trickled down one of his yellow canines. Jacob grabbed the man's head and held up his shoulders so he wouldn't fall from the windowsill.

"And the notes rise, the drums pound, they soar higher into the heavens. Your muscles are undone, and you no longer exist in this universe. Yet, you can still feel the song and the voice of God, vibrating your bones to dust and disintegrating your body in a way more divine than any understanding of death that's possible." "And then," Jacob said, his whispers rising to a shout. The man's eyes were flooding like a backed up drain, two tubs overflowing with gray liquid. He had been hanging out the window for almost five minutes now, listening to Jacob's words. An imprint of the windowsill would no doubt leave a painful red imprint on his stomach.

"You begin to wish that at that moment, you would die, that this moment would be the last thing you are conscious of."

"And?" the man whimpered.

"You die. The sound is over and you fall to the ground as the fallout settles over your body and warms you like a blanket."

The man was almost starting to hyperventilate. Jacob pushed his bony shoulders up and rested them on the windowsill. The man buried his head in his arms, sobbing uncontrollably, his head going into a series of spasms and shivers. He quickly regained control of himself and looked at Jacob, with his eyes that looked like they were covered with pink shells.

"And that... is music?"

Jacob nodded and took a cigar out of his pocket.

"The music of my grandfather? That was how it sounded?"

"I heard him myself. He wrote some very beautiful symphonies," Jacob said. He turned and started to walk away. "You'll want to pull yourself together, get back before your supervisor becomes suspicious," he said to him, not bothering to turn back around. He could only assume the man would regain his nerves. If he didn't, he would ruin things for the others who wanted to buy from Jacob, possibly ruin it for the others at every workstation that wished to buy from anyone. The whole operation would be destroyed.

Jacob gritted his teeth against a cold gust of wind, cupping his hands to shelter the cinders glowing at the end of his cigar. He partially inhaled, tasting the sweet smoke of tobacco coat his lips. The concrete sidewalks were empty and in ruins, his feet stepping over the faded copper designs of an oak tree extending in two dimensional patterns up and down the block, branching out from the sides with no point of origin.

During work hours, you couldn't loiter or walk outside without a permit giving you permission to leave work sick or be outside for some other emergency. Between 7:00 AM and

5:00 PM the streets were empty and dismal, the kind of sight that remained a constant reminder of the law. Since Jacob was an upper class citizen, he had a permit and special privileges, yet this was of no real value without a legitimate reason to be outside. He had to be careful or they would charge him with a federal offense, a charge that sometimes removed a person from society all together. He could not spend his remaining days working hard labor and eating from dumpsters; he was getting old in his days and soon getting up in the morning would require some assistance.

An officer's car pulled out of a street adjacent to the one Jacob was on; the exhaust exhaled a cloud of steam like the frozen breath of a great beast. Jacob turned a corner and walked briskly, his feet floating over the concrete with few steps seeming to touch the ground.

"I'm being sloppy," he muttered under his breath. He usually knew the correct path to take, and when, in order to avoid any police officers. The sound of the engine grew louder from behind and he sped up, trying to reach an intersection so he could make the next turn. He pulled back his coats sleeve and blinked at his watch.

"Damn. Gonna be late..." he said, discarding the cigar on the ground. He started running across the intersection, his lungs heating up under his frail chest. Across the street was one of the work centers; a large gray tower built using uninspired structures and shapes. Each building was a simple square block with two doors and a series of windows, architecture that made no use of Greek or gothic designs. Next to the working center was another building designed in the same fashion, and then another one and so on for at least five blocks, as if they were planted like a crop of corn. Each rooftop was a flat plateau with a drain in the center to avoid water weight, or worse, ice, the kind of addition that was later added after numerous roof cave-ins and tragedies. Upon each door was a plaque of copper engraved with crimson gems, each gem cut into a number. Above each number was a miniature flood light, causing the image to burn into the back of your eye, visible long after seeing it in the first place. In the fog the numbers were like the winking eye of a demon, staring after waking from its sleep.

Jacob turned to look down each end of the street, inspecting the area for patrol officers. After seeing that the path was clear, he quickly crossed over. He reached the other side and gazed upward, following the path of bricks to a forest of clouds in the sky.

Seeing the front walls up close, Jacob noticed how the bricks were deteriorating with age. Not a scratch on them, nor was there any graffiti, yet the bricks still seemed to be slowly falling apart as if they were infected with a cancer. Jacob reached the end of the first building and turned left, entering a slim alleyway that lay between each work center. A row of windows lined the wall, continuing to the end of the alleyway, reaching a dead end. The second to last window was one that led to the men's bathroom on the first floor. Jacob stopped and checked his watch.

"Almost didn't make it," he smiled and sighed to himself. He peered up towards the window, which was almost at eye level. He stood on his toes and looked inside, seeing if the coast was clear. He had already finished his drops today and would spend the remainder of his day taking orders from the remaining six stops left on his route.

The bathroom was an empty cell of scarred porcelain structures on a chaotic pattern of floor tiles. The stall doors were removed to discourage secrecy. No one was inside. He had to be

Careful. Once he had confused a man going to the bathroom as a buyer. The supposed buyer believed Jacob to be a pervert and threatened him with violence if he ever caught him peeping at men urinating again.

Jacob stood down from his toes and waited, deciding to extend his waiting period an extra minute. A long coat draped like a curtain around his bulky body, a body he spent years earning and would soon pay the price for. Despite all of his bulk, the cold had taken the feeling from his fingertips.

"It's gonna be hard to write anything down," he said to himself, rubbing his hands together to thaw out his joints. A sound of crumbling paper came from his front pocket as he pat his hand over it, double-checking that he had everything. The outline of a pencil could be felt within his pocket. With how cold it was, pencils were his only option because ink would freeze quickly.

He peered into the men's room again and pulled back his coat sleeve to check his watch. Times up, he thought, and though he felt bitter for having waited, he smiled and turned from the window to walk out of the alleyway.

"Wait," a voice from behind whispered. Jacob paused and stared at the empty street in front of him, fearful that at any second he would make eye contact with an officer.

"You're late. If I stay too long I'll miss my next appointment," Jacob said, continuing his walk towards the street. If he lingered too long at a particular stop then he would have to reconfigure his route in order to avoid patrol cars, a pattern that was complicated even when you were on time. With the slightest change would come uncertainty and the chance of getting caught.

Why am I out here officer? Well I believe I dropped a penny in one of the alleyways and I can't seem to... why am I there in the first place? Ah yes. Well I was trying to find the local cafe and mistook the path as...

Total garbage. You had to give the police some credit. A story like that would only lead to an investigation and increased surveillance.

"Please!" the man whispered, his voice aching to shout. Jacob kept walking.

"I got held up by the supervisor. He didn't believe I had to go to the bathroom because I had already gone earlier today," he pleaded. Jacob sighed and kept moving.

"I'm begging you," the man said, this time shouting. Jacob stopped walking and a gust of wind blew in his face, like an icy hand digging its fingers into his eyes, pushing him back. He squinted and heard the stalling of a car's motor, moving toward the opening of the alley. He spun around and ran back to the bathroom window, motioning for the man to hide from clear view.

"Down you damn fool," he hissed. To Jacob's relief, the man shrank from clear view back into the bathroom. A floating head wasn't something an officer would overlook if he happened to see it out of the corner of his eye. Jacob bent down and pulled his coat over himself, blending into the gray walls of the alley. After the sound of the motor passed, he poked his head out of his coat, turning to look over his shoulder towards the exit.

"Gone...good. It's safe to talk again," he said to the stranger in the bathroom. The head of the worker peered out the window like a turtle.

"Hello, my name is--"

"Don't tell me your name. I'll remember your face," Jacob quickly cut him off, not bothering to maintain civility. The buyer winced and stared at him from above, his head shrunken and shallow looking, the pores of his face filled with dirt.

"You look like one of the upper class."

"Maybe. You're wasting time. I'll have to skip my next appointment because of you," Jacob coarsely responded. He glanced down and searched his pockets for a cigar.

"I'm sorry. I was only curious. Is it true you're allowed to vote for leaders, and that you know what day it is?"

"Everything has a price. Did you want to know what day it was? I can sell you the date if you'd like. Five dollars is the standing rate for today's date. I'll throw in your date of birth for an extra dollar." He pulled out a long cigar and bit the end off, spitting it onto the ground with no history save for Jacob's footprints. He struck a match against the wall; igniting the cigar he held in his other hand.

"No. I didn't spend months saving up just to find out the day. Everyday, you see I work in the food district, all day I cut onions. All day I cut, and I peel the skin off, and I cut the ends off. My finger nails are never clean and sometimes the onions skin is so thick that when I try to peel it off, it cuts into the skin under my nails," he said, almost in a kind of panic. He extended one of his hands revealing a silver tool attached to his thumb. It was a small thimble with a razor soldered on, a tool used to make the first slice in every onion. The skin on his hands were stained yellow, a color that faded as it went further down his wrist, like a glove so fine and tight you could not see a definite boundary.

"The smell is always there. I don't know what anything smells like. When I bring food up to my nose to eat, I can only smell the onions on my hands. I try washing them, and soaking them in alcohol. Once I tried burning them but--"

"Did you want to know how to get the smell out?" Jacob interrupted, exhaling smoke in to his face. The man coughed and shook his head.

"No. I'm sorry to go on. It's just that, you offer to sell the day when I would only know... time has a way. I don't know how you explain," he stopped and sighed, staring down at the ledge of the window.

"I understand," Jacob said, shaking his head. "Time has a way of wiping your memory. Sometimes you have a thought and the next day you forget it?" Jacob asked the man. The man nodded and smiled.

"It's the work, and the TV. They leave nothing for you, no hour that is unscheduled. But they cannot..." he paused, looking over his shoulder. He turned back and extended his neck further out the window, his throat muscles like vines half buried in the dirt.

"They cannot take your dreams from you. I have a reoccurring dream, from my childhood. I must ask what you always wanted to do."

Jacob sighed and considered the question.

"I suppose I've always wanted to be a writer."

"A writer?" There is no use anymore is there? With the damn entertainment district and

their machines, what does it matter if you want to write? Or there is no point in wanting to do something because they will already have something for you to do?"

"I'm going to miss my second appointment. Please get to the point," Jacob said, his face reserved in a grimace.

"I'm sorry. I've always wanted to be a sailor, to see the ocean. In my dreams my father is holding me on his lap, telling me stories. I'm laughing. Most of the stories don't make any sense, but he keeps telling me one about the ocean, and how he was once a great merchant that sailed the world before it was united as one nation."

Jacob nodded, the man continued.

"He tells me the most fantastic tale, about being a trader, but I cannot remember it. He tells me something happened, and that everyone knew about it. He was famous, yet since it is a dream everything he tells me is vague. I cannot remember the tale, and though my father is in my dreams, I cannot see his face." The man was finished. Jacob tapped ashes on to the ground and turned his head back up towards the man, staring impatiently. There was an awkward silence during which the wind pulled strands of silk from the smoldering cigar.

"That is a fine story. But what do you want?"

The man looked flustered. He was tired and time was running short. Soon his supervisor would wonder why his bathroom break was taking so long. He would have to lie and say he was feeling sick, and even then there would be suspicions that something was not right. If one man raised suspicions there would forever be guards in the bathroom from then on out, ruining the possibility for all other workers in the food district to buy from Jacob.

"I want you to find the story. He said he was famous. Bring me his story." Jacob scribbled the vague demand on to a scrap of paper, marking the time and the location. He looked back up and squinted.

"Do you have a name? Anything to go on?"

The man looked off in to the distance, searching his mind for an answer. His teeth tore in to his lip, trying to destroy the state of static and shock his mind was in. For a moment it looked like there would be no answer, no lead to find the story in question. A tear filled his left eye, slipping off his pupil as the wind picked it up.

"I can't..."

"Then I must leave. There are—"

"The Saint Paul!" the man almost screamed, tears of joy exploding from his eyes like drool. "It's the name of his ship. He was very religious," he stuttered, smiling so hard that Jacob felt his supervisor would notice the stretch of his face muscles when he returned.

"The Saint Paul...very good. Does ten sound fair?" The man couldn't stop crying at first, shocked by a memory he didn't think existed anymore inside of his mind. Like all workers, he was quick to regain his stability.

"Ten is... all I have. I wanted more." He sheepishly pulled his head back, avoiding Jacob's gaze, though Jacob wasn't even looking up.

"I wanted to know..." he started.

"Get on with it," Jacob mumbled his mouth full with the tip of his cigar.

"His face. I can't remember his face. Please, give me his story and tell me what he looked

like," the man said.

"That would cost more. More than ten. That's the kind of information that would run about fifteen."

The man pressed his chin against the windowsill of the bathroom and sighed.

"What if... if I gave you ten and paid the rest later. I'll pay you eight over time, if I can get the story and his face now."

Jacob turned to the entrance of the alleyway, blowing smoke into his hands, warming them up. He could hear the man breathing, and the sighs that broke up the pattern of his breath. How long did he wait until deciding to meet with me, Jacob wondered. How many days did he spend cutting onions just to save ten dollars?

"Don't worry about it. Be here in three days at this exact time. You'll have your story and you're father's face," Jacob said. He didn't bother turning around, but he could almost hear the man smile. He hoped it would fade before he went back to work. It would not be normal for a man to be so happy after using the bathroom.

The alleyway grew shorter as he left the bathroom window, heading towards the streets to begin his journey to his next appointment. He stopped at the edge of the wall and pressed his ear against the empty space without stepping out. After waiting a few seconds, he stepped out and ran to the second building south of the work center that housed the food district, deciding to skip his next appointment.

"Jacob," a friendly voice said. The friend, Andrew, sat alone in the corner of a dimly lit cafe, placing his cup of tea on a circular table next to a small note pad surrounded by water stains and thousands of pen marks. Jacob walked over, ignoring the glances of other upper class citizens who quietly drank their coffee and tea, believing conversation to be some kind of rude interruption of the speech continually made by silence.

"Andrew, how did it go today?" Jacob said, pulling a chair back from the table. He sat down and peered over towards the barista who was standing patiently for the next order. He noticed Jacob and, without any words exchanged, brought over a cup of coffee with cream and sugar. Jacob nodded approvingly and turned back to Andrew who laid down his pen and stretched his hands in the air, yawning loudly.

"Not too bad. A few of them, if you can believe it, forgot the information I sold them and wanted to buy it again. They didn't even remember having purchased it from me in the first place."

"A bit sad isn't it?" Jacob responded, standing up to take his coat off. He placed it on the chair and sat back down.

"It is. But they're even worse if you tell them they've forgotten the one thing they've always wanted to know. And that they've already paid you for it," he said, placing his hand under a chin of gray whiskers, pulling at individual hairs with his fingers.

"Sometimes they remember. Their dreams have a way of holding certain memories, like hidden reservoirs of water," Jacob said.

"How true. Anything interesting today?"

"Someone wanted his real name. Another person wanted a bit of history on the wars

before the Uniting. Standard stuff."

Andrew grunted and sat back, staring at the stiff figures in the cafe that refused to relax the tension in their muscles. Their bodies were like ancient statues, stained with smoke and dirt, refusing to crumble. Jacob stirred cream and sugar into his coffee and stopped abruptly, remembering a particular order that was bothering him.

"Oh wait. There is something I'm having trouble with. A man wanted to know about his father. He did something great while sailing as a merchant in a ship called the Saint Paul. For the life of me I can't think of anything. I've never written a story about a sea merchant before," Jacob said, stopping to sip his coffee.

"I'm sure you'll think of something. You've always had a knack for storytelling. If it weren't for those damn entertainment machines you would be sitting in front of a typewriter, sipping brandy."

"Reading my latest reviews?" Jacob smiled.

"Another best seller," Andrew said, raising his hands in the air and expanding them with each word. They both laughed, drawing a few cold eyes from the rest of the room, save for the barista who appreciated laughter in an otherwise silent room. Andrew bent his head closer to Jacob.

"They don't care for us," Andrew whispered. He rolled up the sleeves on his sweater and cracked his knuckles.

"They don't like how we're selling lies?" Jacob asked.

"No. They think it's cruel."

"Maybe," he said and stopped to listen to them sip their coffee and tea. Even the act of drinking seemed joyless and mechanical to the others.

"But sometimes a lie is less cruel than nothing at all," he finished, wondering if he believed what he was saying.

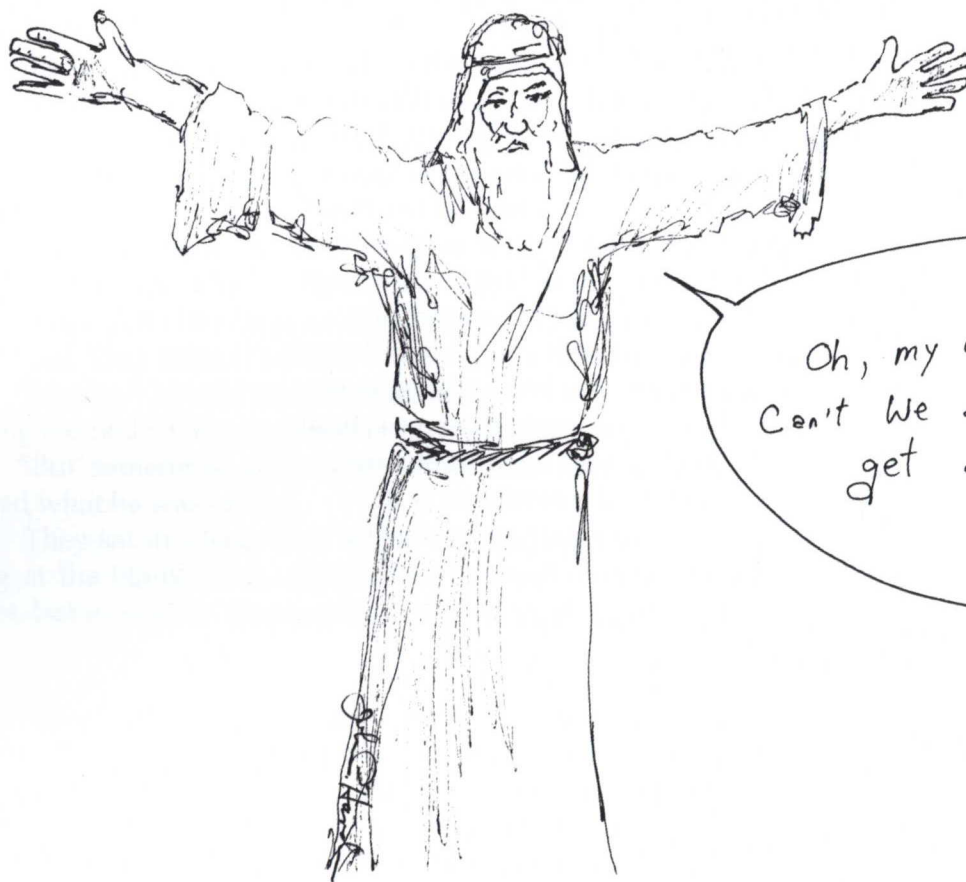
They sat in silence and began working again. Jacob pulled out a notepad and a pencil, staring at the blank sheet of paper with a fearful curiosity. The first words were always the hardest, but soon after, the story started to write itself. They always did.

Woman

By John Fritz

I don't need your face inside my head
I don't need your body in my bed
I don't need "someone that I can trust"
I don't need your body and your bust
I don't need your plastic face to smile
I don't need your bullshit magazine style
I don't need your soft skin infecting my brain
I don't need you anyway
I don't need to play your little games
I don't need to douse your little flames
I don't need to ace your little tests
I don't need to be your perfect guest
I don't need your cancer on my brain
I don't need your mind to keep me sane
I don't need you pulling at my strings
I don't need to "fix" everything.
I don't need to fulfill your material needs
I don't need your body talking to me
I don't need you controlling everything
I don't need the comfort of a ring
I don't need a plastic set of keys
I don't need your perfect reality
I don't need you changing everything
I don't need you looking after me

And you say you "love me"
That you miss me and think of me
And that you'll take me to that special place
Well I say, f*** you MASTER
I'm not like you
And I say, to hell with us.



Oh, my offspring -
Can't we all just
get along?

The Children of Abraham Family Reunion

By John P. Havelin

VESSEL

By Joy Oakley

Do you know who you are to me?

It's happened before. I see God's will in some people:
the ones who pull up gently beside me, only to sweep me
into a vortex and hurl me out into the unknown.

I can't stop the plunge. I swim, breathing hard, unable to
keep my head up long enough to see the next bend. I
need to keep going. I want to.

You appeared and asked for something small the first
time. It was easy. I didn't share my heart.

But you welcomed me and tugged at me softly.

Then I showed you a piece of my soul. You could have
been blind and ignored my risk. But you saw me.

I knew I could trust you.

You said I could swim.

The river's current pulls me: sometimes swiftly, through
churning whitecaps; sometimes peacefully under softly lit
treetops. I don't know where we're going.

I see you on the bank sometimes.

Then you are with me in the water, even as you wave
goodbye from the side.

Your faith keeps me buoyant.

You are God's smile.

Flowers

By Davis Menya

Flowers, that sweet nice aroma, breathes new hope for the day
Flowers, the beautiful laid out colors, brighten the moment
Flowers, the smooth tender touch, calms the rough day
Flowers, the lovely welcoming look, persuades indescribable comfort
Flowers, opens the long ago closed windows
Flowers, give life to the bees; the bees give ecstasy to me
Flowers, make me hear joy and gladness

Flowers, that strong passion, irresistible and forever new
Flowers, the tenderness, a moment always to cherish
Flowers, the rescuer of the desolate
Flowers, the wings of the hopelessness
Flowers, the sign for a brighter season
Flowers, that great laughter and smile, what a joy to have flowers
Flowers, you will never depart from me

Flowers, the light and the guide in life
Flowers, illuminating through the hard dark moments
Flowers, as Christmas I will always love
Flowers, the miracle that changed my life
Flowers, the light has shone since, dark paths seem possible now
Flowers, I have been adopted in the light
Flowers, the light that kindles fire which never dies

Flowers, the delight, the patience, I rest in comfort
Flowers, precious, always appeasing, bring all fulfillment
Flowers, the silence bursts loud, no longer mute
Flowers, blossom at the right season, never early nor late, just on time
Flowers, worthy waiting for, preserved to be rejoiced
Flowers, comfort, renewing and peace, what a pleasant gift
Flowers, how can I be without flowers?

Flowers, in the valley I will smell the sweet scent
Flowers, on the mountains I will taste the delicious honey
Flowers, on the plateaus I will pluck my favorite colors
Flowers, in the canyons I will see you blossom
Flowers, in the desert I will run to the oasis
Flowers, on the high tree I will sit and guard you
Flowers, such a beautiful journey in search of you

Blessed

By Olga Dvornikova

All my life was in darkness
Shivering and cold
I ran hopelessly,
Blind
Moving, running, crawling,
Scratching and screaming
I was lost
In my own delusions
I kept praying
For God to send me a candle
To know I'm not alone,
That there is hope.
I screamed and I cried out your name
Return to me! Come back to me!
I beg with all my heart!

One time I knew life would be different
I saw you as you walked into my life
You colored the black and white vacancies
With one look you had my heart
I smiled knowingly
I knew my days would change
I knew you'd awaken me
You'd make my world bloom with hope again
You raised me out of the moonlight into day
I knew you were mine right then

So much time has passed since
Yet each time I look at you
Your silky black curls,
Your chocolate temples
Your ochre eyes – they envelop me
I feel so warm and loved

You came at the right time
You're whom I've asked for,
You're everything I could ever dream of
Whom I never expected to meet
Each day I'm with you is a blessing
I have a hand to hold as I walk into the
unknown.

Complementary Dueling Verses

By George Sworn

(Infancy . . .)

A Song in Love Major

(We are not flesh given Life . . .)

There is a Song at the center of the Universe;
An inspiring harmony being played;
It is our guide to The Spirit;
Ancient, long before Creation was made;

(Born blind, waiting to see . . .)

It is the whisper in our dreams,
Assurance when we are alone;
It is our path to salvation,
Away from mansions of wood and stone;

(We are Life, given flesh...)

The Song to be remembered,
When pain comes to bear;
"Split a piece of wood
And, Love is there."

(Once wilted; become free...)

Han Gang

By Minjoo Kweon

The Great River
That divides the city
Like the line
The thirty eighth
That separates North and South.

Seoul's souls pour their troubles,
Tears and bodies into
The glistening water.

Countless cigarette smoke,
Blurs the emerald wood,
Mystic mountains,
Whispering rice,
And skyscrapers that surround the
Life giver.

Lovers sigh;
Children cry,
On the banks of
The ancient river, Han.

The Trek

By Donna Dulin

Drop me in a northern wood,
Of balsam pine and birches white,
And leave me with just one true friend,
To sit with me at campfire light.

And we will track the mountain path,
Through forest glen and dew drenched dale,
Ingesting all the woodland gives,
As soft we tread each foot worn trail.

And she will see the things I miss,
And I, all that escapes her eye,
To know the spirit of the Earth,
And hear the mountains' gentle sigh.

That stood in stalwart power there,
As if to dare us to ascend,
As we make way o'er sweat slick root,
Inching around the crag filled bend.

As steeply postured mountainsides,
Strained as if reaching toward the sky,
With boulders strewn, the path unclear,
Embattled, yes, but still we try.

To test the spirit and its shell,
To feel our chests beat like a drum,
Hamstrings tight and calves strained sore,
Stress filled back and feet near numb.

Hear no lament for worldly goods,
As riches are astound for the soul,
Star-studded nights and sun strewn days,
Valued more than any gold.

The graceful fern, the orange eft,
The otter in aquatic dance,
The timid fawn, the raging moose,
To catch a glimpse, perchance, perchance.

We'll breathe the quenching liquid air,
In shaded valley, damp and still,
Consolation ever sweet
Refreshment from the conquered hill.

On summit breathe, look to the sky,
To see in perfect chevron, glide,
The symmetry southern glide,
Descent begins this mountainside.

The pleasures of this sojourn are,
Of elemental treasure store,
Of crackling fire warm at night,
Of refreshing water, cool and pure.

Of shelter cozy, safe and warm,
And simple fare for strengthened frame,
But best by far, is one true friend,
Who shares the trek and feels the same.

3 Page Letter

By Sonny

Dear MiNajah,

I'm sorry that I brought your life such pain,
Into your sunny days, I brought nothing but rain.
I would get calls from your friends saying "Sonny, please help her,"
I didn't, I turned my back and caused you to run and seek shelter.
And you found it in a bad place, in this guy I used to know,
In a place made for whores and where the broken hearts go...not my Queen.
I'm sorry for breaking your heart and thinking that I could just write it back together,
When I put down my umbrella, he sheltered you from the bad weather.
Knowing your heart was smashed he took advantage of your misery,
He was always saying that I was the worst storm in your history.
Your heart hasn't seen rain like that in a couple of years,
Since your dad died, but I was there to dry those tears.
We broke up baby, but you were still in denial,
Always saying "If I catch you with another girl I swear to God I'll..."
As I turned to walk away I could see you clutch your stomach as you hurled,
God promised to never again flood the world, but still he allowed me to drown the heart of this girl...
Isn't it the same thing?
But reality set in for me shortly after sundown,
You were pregnant with his baby, "aw girl what have you done now".
I grabbed my dog, ran to your house, prepared myself for the showdown,
Knocked on your door, you answered; I spoke, "Listen I have to know now!"
Your eyes confessed your sins and your mouth started to explain,
About how you were with that guy to hurt me and how he got you hooked on cocaine.
I remember your tears ran wild as you told me I was your eternal flame,
And about how the drugs you sold for him gave you money to maintain...
I wish you would have come to me.
All of a sudden came a man, mysteriously emerging from the night,
I knew who it was so I dipped out of sight clutching my pit-bull tight.
I looked to my puppy "Quiet girl, you'll eat when we get home,"
He came for his money, I knew you didn't have it; I wish he would have left you alone.
He went to a yell from a whisper, as he knew I was listening and he wanted me to hear what was said,
I wanted to kill him when he grabbed your hair, but froze when he told that the next time he saw me I was dead...
I never wanted you to witness the violence.
Remember Na, we started walking, it seemed like forever we were talking,

You kept looking behind you as if you feared your own shadow stalking.
 I turned to you and asked you how you could say you loved me,
 When 24/7 you walked around with his seed.
 You couldn't control your tears as you spoke in such pain,
 Your eyes looked afraid, then you looked at me as if I were insane...
 You spoke with such love.
 "I love you and...deep down inside I know you love me too,
 What part of that don't you understand, the I or the LOVE YOU?
 You're the player with the excuses, my game is see-through,
 Its pure love for my boo, stop playing Sonny; you know it's you.
 I'm dying inside Sonny, but it seems like my pain will never reach you,
 This is your child I'm carrying, Sonny2-your sequel.
 I love you and" ...You froze in your speech, tires screeched, hands reached,
 I could see, across the street, bullets squeezed, you sheltered me, you took three,
 You never screamed.
 On my knees begging please, baby you can't leave me,
 Looking into the air confused about why my God has deceived me.
 I can still picture the 4 doors, tinted windows; they drove a black sedan,
 5 shots rang, you jumped in front of me because I was your man.
 BANG!!! You were hit, and as your blood and tears dripped to the ground,
 I could only stare into the crowd hoping to see just one friendly face standing around.
 But they were all just standing there talking quietly like in 'whisper down the lane',
 By the time it got to the end you know the whole story had changed.
 Jimmy pointed me out; he called out my name in shame,
 He said that I was the one who took aim...that I had shot you in cold blood so now
 I should taste hells flames...He still blames me for his brother's death.
 I gave that man my watch and my chain to use his phone to call for help,
 By the time 911 came a lot of blood had been spilled.
 I felt a pain in my stomach the second those bullets hit your body,
 I still feel like God got me, even though, the guns never shot me.
 I'll never forget that day, it started raining outside,
 I wish we weren't there cause neither you nor our child survived.
 In the hospital room you could barely open your eyes,
 But you were breathing just enough to hear me whisper, "I'll always love you ma.
 Breathe baby, breathe, come on you have to dry,
 I'm gonna hold you in my heart for the rest of my life."
 I dropped a tear remembering all the good that you taught me,
 Your eyes opened, you grabbed my hand as you tried to speak softly.
 "Sonny, listen to me, tell the doctors not to save me,
 I know that I sound crazy, but they have to help my baby.
 JUST SAVE MY BABY, SAVE MY BABY, Sonny make sure that they save our child",
 I knew it was the end so I replied...

"I know baby, I know, sssh, it's gonna be all right,
just get some sleep and I'll see you in a little while."
You closed your eyes and I knew it would be the last time,
That your light brown eyes would ever look up and gaze into mine.
And you knew it too, but the pain was just too much inside,
So I laid my head down on your chest and I swallowed my pride.
5 minutes later the machine flat lined...
I still fiend for the summer breeze, when you return to loving me....
And I awake with you up under me, or next to me, feels like only yesterdee...
Or yesterday, I guess it's best to say, though it's sad to say,
If we could have back that day, or just have today...
You'd probably be mad at me, and scream at me,
For no reason, but you believed in me....
Your loves with me, it's inside of me,
I guess this is my open heart diary...and my 2004 I'm sorry.
Sonny

Ownership

By Samantha O' Grady

I own you.
No words were more untrue
Yet I still feel it
I own you.

I own you.
Slavery's dead, no person is allowed to own another
as if they could
There are no religious sects here that
make people property
I own you.
I should.

I own you.
I paid for you with joy and tears
Didn't you know "I do" means
I own you?
Dear?

I own you.
Is it the id or ego or that other thing?
I never studied psychology
I know it's wrong,
but the little voice persists.
Everything I want, desire, is mine
I own you
til the end of time.

Though you may gather dust on a high up shelf
where I put my precious things
I own you
You are mine to dust or hide
Stay where I tell you
I own you
Your free will is mine.

I own you.
That feeling we learn at three.
That to care is to possess
I own you
And you own me.

I think I am Pregnant

By George Sworn

I think I am pregnant,
This must be divine.
Between work, school, and bills,
I know I never had the time.

I am often nauseous.
Unable to rest.
Especially in the morning,
Just before a test.

I eat late at night,
Because of the awful cravings.
And when I finally relax,
My feet start aching.

If this is a joke,
Then, it is very cruel.
Otherwise I'll grin and bear it,
Since, it must be school.

My Moon

By Mirjana Vlahovich

I see the other side of the moon
I see the other side of you
glowing
brighter and brighter
others unworthy to see
unless they take the time
to search your light
glowing
brighter and brighter
straining my eyes with tears
pleading the night sky
to reveal your beautiful face
glowing
brighter and brighter
diamonds surround your brow
rusted with torment
rigid with fright
glowing
brighter and brighter
but yet you smile
dimly waving a throw
beckoning my chin to you
glowing
brighter and brighter
I kiss the sky each night
carry the moon in my hands
and cradle it in my heart's care
glowing
brighter and brighter
in the day you sleep
resting in my beating cavity
gazing through my teeth as I grin
glowing
brighter and brighter
for you

Stars

By Samantha O'Grady

sitting on a fence between here and eternity
i consider carefully the void
i sift the winds with my teeth
testing the taste of each
the clock has no hands
but ticks furiously
must I count them diligently to keep

The Truth

By John Godson

Fall into a trance and think
For hours without a blink
And sink
Into an abyss of thought
My brain is caught
In a mental booby trap
I'm forced to chew my way through
My old thoughts to regenerate the new
Realizing what was taught to me at an early age wasn't true
How was Columbus able to discover a settled land
Your father won't always be there with a helping hand
God does not exist
You get more accomplished as a pacifist
I've learned to question what I was taught
The truth can always be bought especially to sell war
And keep down the poor
Perceive without bias
Is the only way you can reach the highest
You can sell anything, people will buy it
But I'm a non-profit organization offering the truth so try it
There is only one truth surrounded by an infinite amount of lies
Which may only be seen by an odd amount of eyes
You have to journey on an odyssey just to find it
I'm on a toilet sitting above some Divine shit

God can only be found in one's self
Commit sin. Don't worry there is no hell.
Those who believe in the All Mighty One
Take a look at the sun
Gaze into the ocean
That combination is the creation potion
Science needs no faith
There is no blindfolded faith covering my face
The answers lie in space
My brain stays dirty unwashed by money-hungry churches
Everyday I go hunting, excavating on truth searches
But I usually come up empty handed
The media force feeding propaganda
STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS
I want to start a revolution
Like when Darwin introduced the Theory of Evolution
We need to get rid of corrupt politicians
Only thinking of the rich when they make their decisions
America is a collective missionary
preaching war to spread their capitalist gospel
As buildings topple
We are being lied to by Ted Coppel
Avoid war at all cost
Or all hope is lost

Train

By Mirjana Vlahovich

here I am
on this train
so vulnerable
shaking
as we speed by
I see nothing
but my fingernail
as I bite away
all my dreams with you
my eyes fade
as I look to the past
I turn quickly
scan the car
see the people dwindling
where are we?
I wonder
but think not
as the heat rises within me
and my stomach drops through
and hits the rails below
the cold night air outside
I press my face
Seeking a way to grab
onto the glass
searching for a way out a reassuring glance
to retreat my stolen insides
and run atop the train
outrun the feelings
gagging my aching throat
as my heart leaps through
it trying to escape
gargling for air
gasping
stretching
forward and up
rips it open so
but being pulled down
as my stomach churns
beneath the wheels below
vomiting up suicide

for all the wrong I've done
for all the time I've longed
and every moment
that rips me
from my sanity
which I cannot claim
in this crazy world
that spins round me so greatly
and sees me
not at all
the train stops
the wind blows cold
I step outside
look to my feet
as the gusts of air
sweep a ring of leaves
about them
all falls down
before it grows again
I cannot walk
but stare aimlessly
at the roof above me
hiding the stars from me
yet again
but I still see them
and they see me
the world cannot stop
what it can't see
I turn my head
look back
eye on the tracks serenely
the streaking blood
smeared so sweetly
from my entrails
the trails I left behind
to my heart
oh it bleeds
on the tracks of life
as we speed
recklessly by

The Only Witness

By Carl Gunletinger

Oh, poor Eliot he saw it all, the only witness.

He saw the world through twisted play house mirrors.

Mirrors stained with fair ground reminiscence: hypodermics, tequila and broken strings.

The songs never seemed quite right to him, the words shifted about
the pages in an unusual defiance of reality.

Words appeared as phonic symbols spinning in the mirror.

Eliot, the only witness, watched the grotesque California Gods swallow another soul, the street
dogs burn the shoreline with washed up head cases, envisioned life outside his disillusioned
mind and watched lies creep under the back alley door spilling in to flush out the songs and
ignore the songwriter.

Oh, poor Eliot he heard it all, the only witness.

Whisper songs about the trip and love songs about the leaving.

They are genius configurations of a manic bard controlled by perfectly ill-quiet melodies.

He aligns the spiraling words in the mirror in perfect symmetry with his pawnshop,
back-alley voice, executed with the reluctant brilliance of the world's
most peculiarly wonderful austere voice.

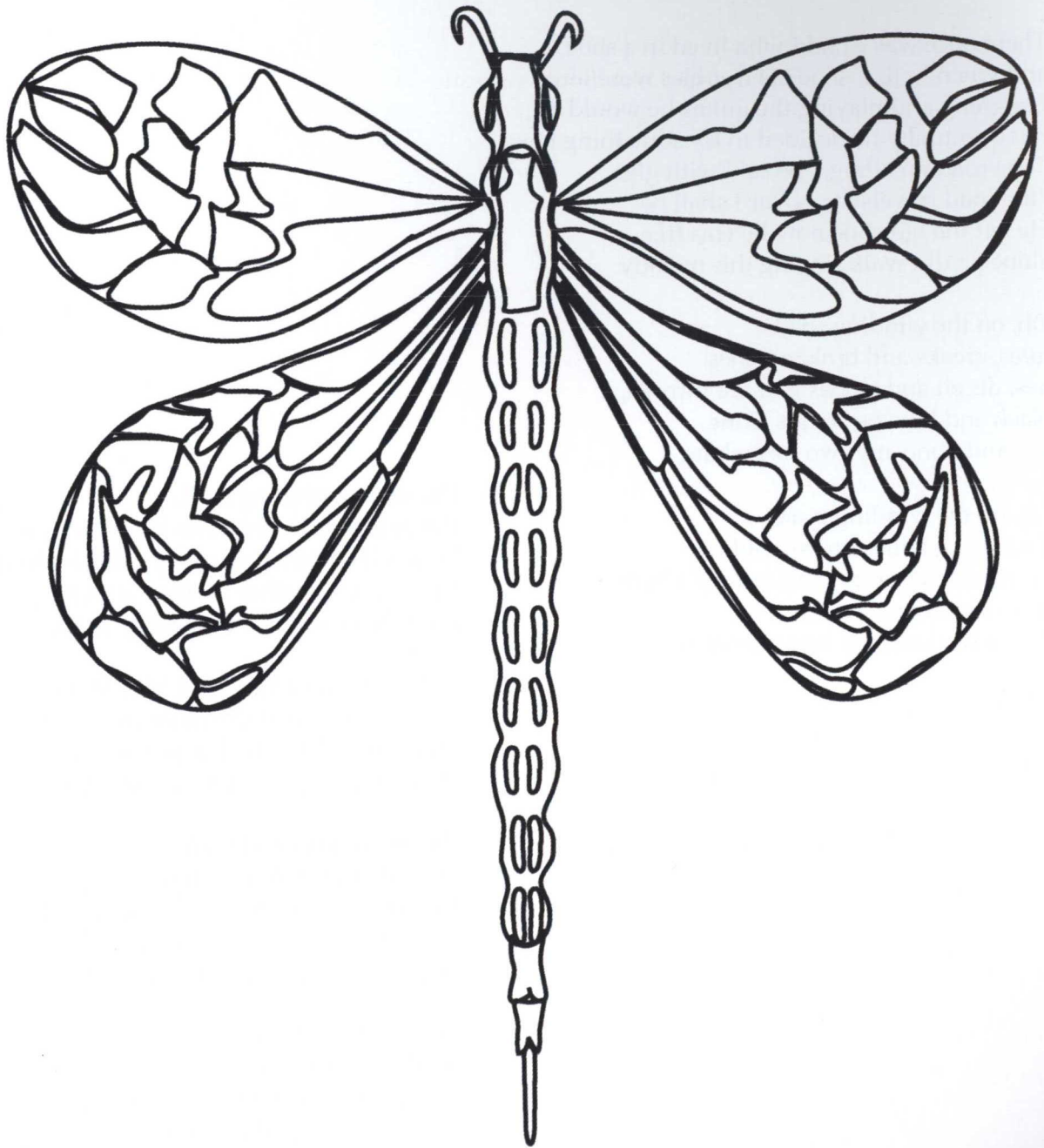
Eliot, the only witness, he heard the sounds of traffic helicopters dropping bombs of a hectic
existence, he listened to dead air radio's weekly feature of dead rock stars, he heard his friends
and fans, but they did not understand.

Oh, poor Eliot you only wanted to end it all and fade away as sour memories must.

The blade slipped past reason and laid in your heart, your blood spilled and all you ever heard
or saw was gone.

I heard the songs and understood that it had to be like this, but what is left are those beautiful
whispers you left behind, and the best I can do is turn from it all and say:

"Thank you Eliot for seeing it all."



Dragon Fly

By Barbra Brennan

My Two Tone Clone

By John Fritz

There once was a child who lived in a shoe,
and when in that shoe his troubles were few.
Laughing and playing the guitar he would do,
but eventually he decided to try something new.
"The road is calling," he said with glee,
"the road travels far, so far I shall be."
He left the old shoe now he was free,
alone he did walk singing this melody.

Oh, on the winding road,
trees, creeks and broken bones,
lies, deceit and stones that are thrown,
black and blue he stands alone,
ash and bone, my two tone clone.

Oh, on the winding road,
the sack of bones grows cold,
his stomach's empty, his money's blown,
he's sleeping on a cold stone,
he walks alone, my two tone clone.

Oh, on the winding road,
the path gets brighter, no longer so grim,
he fancies a girl now and she fancies him,
they travel together for they are kin,
proudly he walks, he is happy again.

April turned to May, and May to June,
they danced all night under the moon,
they sang all day to dampen the mood,
of the ever approaching lingering tune.

Oh, on the winding road,
they try their brittle bones,
their minds are going, their age has shown,
through no fault of their own,
they died alone, my two tone clones.

Oh, in the old bone yard,
lay their brittle bones,
but now it's clear, I've been shown,
that they did not die alone,
that they sat on love's great throne,
they were my two tone clones.